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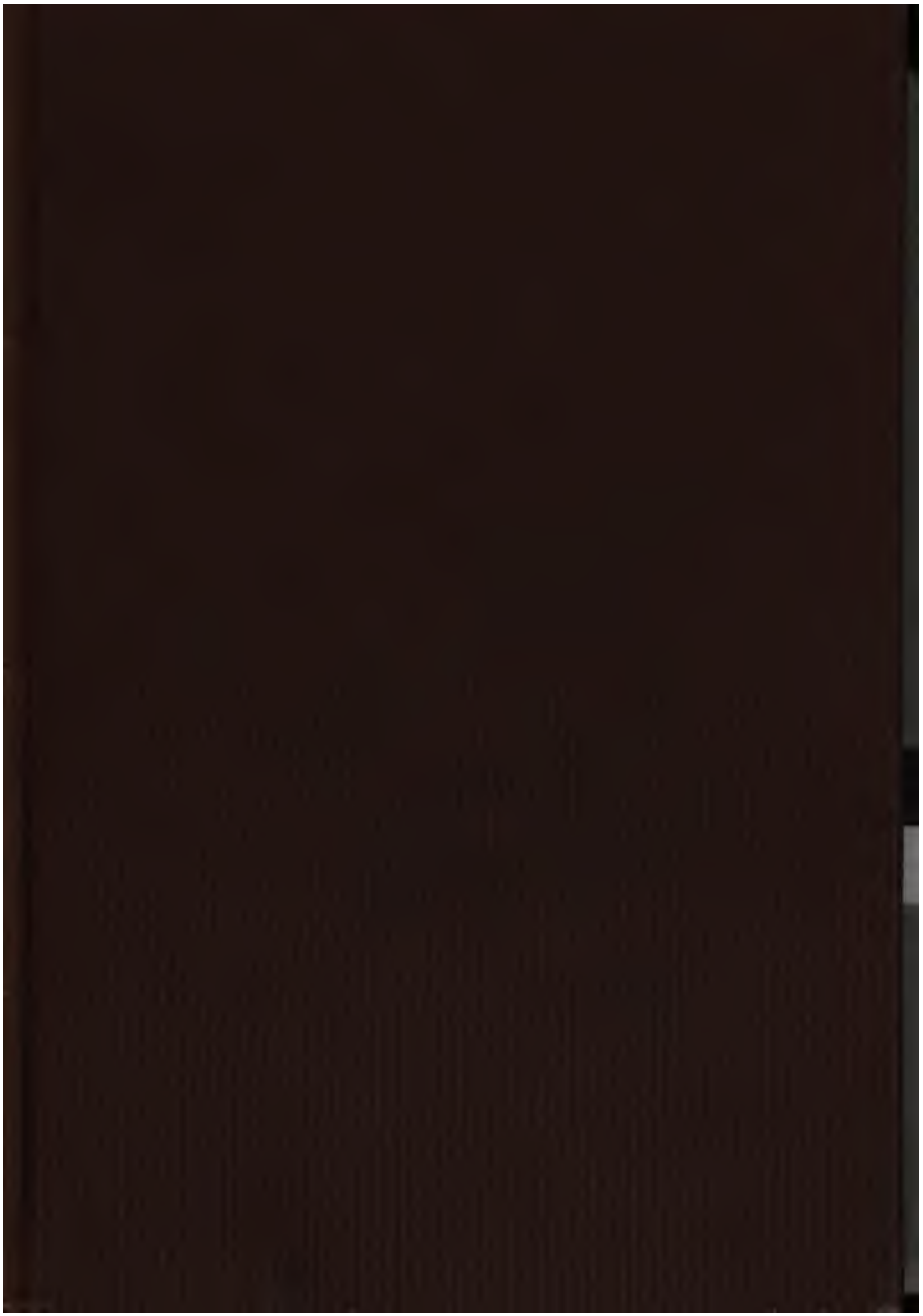

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ESSAY ON MILTON

LIFE AND WRITINGS OF ADDISON

BY

THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY

EDITED BY

WILLIAM P. TRENT

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INTRODUCTION.

THERE can be little doubt that Lord Macaulay is the most popular writer of English prose that this century has produced. Thousands of copies of his *History of England* are still sold every year, and travellers tell us that if an Australian settler possesses three books only, the first two will be the Bible and Shakespeare, and the third, Macaulay's *Essays*. And yet his authority as a critic and historian has been shaken, and his capacity as a poet — for his *Lays of Ancient Rome* is a very popular book — seriously questioned. Nor is his popularity confined to any one circle of readers. Cultivated men and women in their conversation and writings assume a knowledge of his works as a matter of course, but the intelligent laboring man, who is striving for an education, is equally, perhaps more, familiar with them. It is plain that a writer who makes such a wide and lasting appeal deserves careful study, and that a brief survey of his life cannot be without interest.

Thomas Babington Macaulay was born October 25, 1800, at Rothley Temple in Leicestershire. His father Zachary was a Scotchman of probity and talents, who was a distinguished promoter of abolition. Macaulay, therefore, came honestly by the middle-class virtues and defects that are so salient in his character. He was a precocious, nay rather a wonderful child, but does not appear to have been spoiled. His memory was prodigious and his reading enormous, while his faculty for turning out hundreds of respectable verses was simply phenomenal. After a happy period of schooling he entered Cambridge, where he won prizes for verse, and made a reputation for himself as a scholar *and speaker*, but failed of the highest honors on

account of his inaptitude for mathematics. He graduated at twenty-two, was elected a Fellow of Trinity two years later, and the next year startled the world by his brilliant essay on Milton in the *Edinburgh Review*. From this time his career was one of almost unbroken success. He was called to the bar in 1826, but gave more time to his writing and to his political aspirations than to his profession. In 1830 he was elected to the House of Commons through the patronage of Lord Lansdowne, and began his career as a staunch Whig at one of the most important crises in English history, — that of the first Reform Bill.

It is quite plain that if Macaulay had taken seriously to politics at this juncture he would have made a name for himself among English statesmen, or at least among English orators. The speeches he delivered were enthusiastically received, he stood high with the ministers of a party just coming into power, he had the courage of his convictions, he had the wide erudition that has been a tradition with English statesmen, and he had the practical ability to conduct a political canvass (for the new borough of Leeds); but he liked the adulation of society a little too well, and his income was not sufficient to let him bide his time. Dinners at Holland House and breakfasts with Rogers were delightful, no doubt, as delightful as the letters in which he described them to his favorite sister Hannah; and so too was the praise he got for his articles in the *Edinburgh;* but this devotion to society and literature could hardly have been kept up along with an entirely serious and absorbing pursuit of political honors. He was probably well advised, therefore, when in 1834 he accepted the presidency of a new law commission for India and a membership of the Supreme Council of Calcutta. It meant banishment, but it meant also a princely income of which half could be saved. So he set out, taking his sister Hannah with him, for he was a bachelor, discharged his duties admirably, and returned to England in 1838.

On his return he reëntered Parliament and served with distinction but not with conspicuous success. His genius had been diverted and his desires were more than ever divided. He obtained a seat in Lord John Russell's cabinet and supported the Whigs on all great questions, but he was better known as the author of the *Lays of Ancient Rome* (1842) and the *Essays*. He lost his seat for Edinburgh in 1847, having been too outspoken and liberal in his views, yet this meant little to one who was a student by nature and who was about to bring out the first two volumes of the most popular history ever written (1849). The remaining decade of his life was practically the only period in which his energies were undivided. He was indeed reëlected to Parliament from Edinburgh without his solicitation, and he was raised to the peerage in 1857, being the first man to receive such an honor mainly for literary work; but he did little besides labor on his *History* and make notable contributions to the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Other honors of various sorts were showered on him and his fame reached the proportions of Byron's, but his health began to fail and he did not live long enough to experience any reaction. He died of heart trouble on December 28, 1859, in the fulness of his intellectual powers, and leaving his great history incomplete.

The chief reasons for Macaulay's tremendous popularity are not far to seek. He possessed a style which whether metallic, as has been claimed, or not, is at all times clear and strenuous. He simply commanded attention by his positive assurance of statement, and, when once he had obtained it, took care not to lose it through any obscurity. Rather than indulge in qualifications that might embarrass the reader, he chose, it may be unconsciously, to state half truths as whole truths, and to play the advocate while posing as the critic. The world has always loved the man who knows his own mind, and Macaulay knew his and proclaimed the fact loudly. Then again the world has always loved the strong man who is not too far aloof from it to

hold many of its prejudices and opinions. This was just the case with Macaulay, who was little more than a middle-class Englishman with vastly magnified powers. Subtlety of intellect and delicacy of taste were as far from him as they have always been from a majority of his countrymen, but dogmatic assurance and optimistic confidence in whatever was English were his in full measure. The very qualities that made Tennyson for a long time eclipse Browning made Macaulay eclipse Carlyle, and in both cases a natural reaction set in. Critics called attention to the artificial balance of Macaulay's sentences, and to the brazen ring of his verses; they pointed out his blindness to much that is highest and purest in literature; they convicted him of partisanship and made short work of his assumptions of omniscience. In all this they had considerable truth on their side, but as was natural they went to extremes, and the pendulum of opinion is now swinging in Macaulay's direction again. Mr. Matthew Arnold was right when he insisted on Macaulay's middle-class limitations, but he went too far when he practically denied that Macaulay had any claim to the title of poet. Schoolboys and older readers have not been entirely deluded when they have been carried away by the swing of *Ivry* and of *Horatius*. The essay on Milton has done good to thousands of readers, though its critical value is slight in the extreme. The third chapter of the *History*, describing the England of 1685, remains one of the most brilliant pieces of historical narration ever penned, no matter how partisan Macaulay may have been in the remainder of the work. However much his assumptions of omniscience may vex us, we must perforce admit that no modern specialist has ever known his peculiar subject better than Macaulay knew his chosen period of history, the reigns of James II. and William III. Theorize as much as we will about the pellucid beauties of an unelaborated style, we must confess that if the object of writing be to reach and influence men, Macaulay's balanced,

antithetical style is one of the most perfect instruments of expression ever made use of by speaker or writer. We may complain that Macaulay often leaves his subject and wanders off into space, but we have to confess with Mr. Saintsbury that he is one of the greatest stimulators of other minds that ever lived. In short we must conclude that although the brilliant historian and essayist has no such claim to our veneration as a great poet like Wordsworth, or a great novelist like Scott, or a great prophet like Carlyle, nevertheless his place is with the honored names of literature, and his fame is no proper subject for carping and ungenerous criticism.

With regard now to his individual works the highest praise must of course be given to his *History*. In spite of its incompleteness and its partisan character it is plainly one of the most notable of the world's historical compositions. It yields to the great work of Gibbon, but it would be hard to name any other history in English that is its superior in what is after all the essential point, the art of narration. Macaulay claimed that his favorite Addison might have written a great novel, but the claim might better be made for Macaulay himself, since he was a born story teller. Unkind critics have intimated that he drew upon his imagination for his characters, and the public has always confessed that the *History* is as interesting as a novel. We shall not, however, go so far as to maintain that the *History* is a novel or that Lord Macaulay was a great novelist spoiled; but we are at liberty to contend that the great secret of the historian's success lay in his comprehension of the fact that to make the past really live it must be treated in much the same way in which a novelist would treat the materials gathered for his story.

Perhaps enough has been said about our author's scanty poetry, which appeals chiefly through its swing and vigor, but the *Essays* will naturally demand somewhat fuller treatment. Their main value lies probably in the stimulation they give to the intellectual powers of any reader who

has a spark of literary appreciation or the slightest desire to learn. Macaulay's erudition is so great and he wears it so lightly that one is instinctively led to wish for a similar mental equipment, and to fancy that it cannot be very difficult of attainment. Whatever Macaulay likes is described in such alluring terms that a reader feels that it would really be too bad for him not to know more about it. The truth of this statement is amusingly illustrated by an anecdote, given in the *Life and Letters*, of a gentleman who after reading the review of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* sent a servant after the book. Macaulay was sitting near him in the library of the Athenæum Club and enjoyed the incident. But, besides their alluring style and their power of mental stimulation, the *Essays* have the advantage of treating in the main great subjects that people wish to know about, and treating them in such a way as to impart a large amount of compact and very useful information. Perhaps this is the chief reason why men who are self-educated are so familiar with Macaulay. Such readers care very little for the nicer shadings of criticism, but they do care a great deal to have available information and positive opinions furnished them on the great men and events of the past. Hence Macaulay's essay on Bacon will survive the monumental answer that Mr. Spedding gave it; hence his essays on Clive and Warren Hastings will for generations supply the public with all the Indian history it is likely to demand.

After the *Milton* Macaulay wrote about forty essays, all of which appeared in the *Edinburgh* except the five contributed to the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. They fall into two main classes, literary and historical, with a few of miscellaneous character, such as that on Sadler's *Law of Population*. It is a striking proof of Macaulay's genius that they are nearly all as well worth reading to-day as they were when they appeared between the yellow and blue covers. As a rule a review is unreadable a few years after its appearance, as is proved by the dust that settles upon the volumes of such contemporaries of Macaulay's as Mack-

intosh and Talfourd. Their reviews were duly collected into volumes and they were included with Macaulay among the "British Essayists," but they are dead while Macaulay lives. The quarterlies are still published, and their ponderous reviews are read by leisurely people, and immediately forgotten, for there is no form of literature that has less vitality. Yet Macaulay's reviews are still read by thousands and keep alive the names of books and men that would else have long since perished. It is a remarkable literary phenomenon. While Macaulay did not originate the discursive literary review, he first gave it life and popularity, and may be compared to a trunk that puts forth many branches. But the branches are all dead or dying, while the trunk seems to be endowed with perpetual life and vigor. Explain it as we may, the fact remains that the essays on Clive and Pitt and Warren Hastings, on Milton and Addison and Johnson, on Barère and Mr. Robert Montgomery's Poems, although belonging by nature to the most ephemeral category of literature, are as fully entitled to be called classics as any compositions written in the English language during the present century.

Four of the best of these classical essays are included in this Series, and a careful study of them with the aid of the introductions and notes will initiate the student into much of the secret of Macaulay's power and charm. He should not, however, rest content with them, but should read at least most of the *Essays* and the poems, and should then go on to complete the five volumes of the *History*. Even then he will not have all of Macaulay, for the two delightful volumes of the *Life and Letters*, edited by Mr. Trevelyan, will remain to be enjoyed. Mr. Cotter Morison's excellent biography in the *English Men of Letters* will also be found worth perusing, and if a good analysis of the style of the great essayist be wanted, it can be had in a chapter of Professor Minto's well known *Manual of English Prose Literature*.

PREFATORY NOTE.

THE essay on Milton appeared in August, 1825, in the great Whig organ, *The Edinburgh Review*, and was nominally a review of Charles R. Sumner's translation of Milton's tract on *Christian Doctrine*. The *Edinburgh*, established in 1802, was at that time almost as old as the new contributor who was destined to outshine its censorious editor Francis Jeffrey, and its witty cofounder Sydney Smith. Macaulay had previously furnished a few articles to *Knight's Quarterly*, but he was practically an unknown writer when he launched forth the political pamphlet — it was little more — that was to make him famous. Its effect was instantaneous. Social invitations of all sorts littered his table. Jeffrey wrote wondering where he "picked that style up," and the great preacher, Robert Hall, who was near his end, was discovered lying on his floor trying, by means of grammar and dictionary, to work out in the original Italian the parallel between Dante and Milton, — an incident all the more pathetic, as Arnold has remarked, from the fact that he could not have accomplished his purpose had he been in full health and master of the language. But the readers of 1825 were not very critical, and they swallowed the parallel and flattered Macaulay in a way that would be possible now only in the case of the author of the latest dialect story. Yet the public, after all, knew what it was about, and the qualities that made the essay famous seventy years ago keep it famous to-day. These qualities have nothing to do with criticism, for as criticism Macaulay's performance is crude in the extreme. He recognized this fact himself twenty years later, and condemned his own youthful extravagance of matter and style, but Matthew Arnold went further and practically denied that the brilliant rhetorician had the true qualities of a critic at all. However extravagant this claim may seem, it is more than half true at all times and is abundantly true of the essay on Milton, which as criticism is not merely crude and extravagant, but unsound. Its treatment of Milton's poetry, for example, is *lacking in* proportion, in subtlety of penetration, and

even in intellectual veracity. Macaulay's pen simply slipped from his control at times, as when he wrote the absurd sentence about Milton's conception of love uniting "all the voluptuousness of the Oriental harem" with "all the pure and quiet affection of an English fireside." Even the readers of 1825 must have rubbed their eyes at this statement.

But at no time has the essay on Milton been compelled to stand on its merits as criticism. It has had nothing to do but stand on its merits as a piece of special pleading. And where can one find a more enthusiastic and inspiring rhetorical appeal for a favorable verdict in behalf of a man on trial for his reputation? Milton was on trial in 1825, for Johnson's biased *Life* still retained an authority it had never deserved, and there were still people in England who prayed for the Royal Martyr. He is on trial still with those narrow-minded persons who cannot forget that he was a Puritan. To all such people, Macaulay, through his so-called essay, makes a forensic address, which for its power of suspending the judgment and exciting the imagination has seldom been paralleled in the history of literature. Had Milton and Macaulay been contemporaries and had the former been on trial for his life, the latter could have delivered the essay as a speech to the jury, and then published it for literary purposes with hardly greater changes than Cicero made in his oration for Archias. It was, then, a rhetorical appeal that took captive the readers of two generations ago, and it is a rhetorical appeal that captivates us all, old and young, to-day.

Now it is a most excellent thing to be captivated by an appeal that is made in favor of John Milton. No other writer or character in English history will so well repay study unless it be Shakespeare, and him we can study only in his works. But for perfection of artistic workmanship and for loftiness of purpose, for political wisdom and for private virtue, Milton surpasses even Shakespeare himself, and so as a man and a writer is worthy of our eternal regard and reverent contemplation. The materials for the study of his life are full, and when they are mastered the petty fault-findings of captious critics seem to be of as little consequence as the spots on the sun are to the naked eye. The better this noble and heroic man is known, the more he will be loved and honored, and if Macaulay's essay arouse in any reader a desire to know him (as it surely should), then the day of its perusal will be a marked one in that reader's intellec-

tual life. And from the essay he can go on to the great *Life of Milton* by Professor Masson, and to the truly admirable biographies by Mark Pattison (in the *English Men of Letters*) and by Dr. Richard Garnett (in the *Great Writers*), until, at last, steeped in knowledge of his subject and glowing with enthusiasm, he becomes what every man should wish to be — a true Miltonian.

In following the interesting leads which this essay opens, the reader will do well to consult Macaulay's *History of England* and Green's *Short History of the English People*, Saintsbury's *History of Elizabethan Literature*, Edmund Gosse's *History of Eighteenth Century Literature*, Ward's *English Poets*, and Mahaffy's *History of Classical Greek Literature*.

MILTON.

TOWARDS the close of the year 1823, Mr. Lemon,[1] deputy keeper of the state papers, in the course of his researches among the presses of his office met with a large Latin manuscript. With it were found corrected copies of the foreign dispatches written by Milton while he filled the office of secretary,[2] and several papers relating to the Popish Trials and the Rye House Plot.[3] The whole was wrapped up in an envelope, superscribed, "To Mr. Skinner, Merchant."[4]

[1] Robert Lemon (1800–1867) made other important discoveries, and did much to improve the methods of keeping public documents in England.

[2] Milton was made Latin secretary, or rather secretary for foreign tongues, in 1649, and held the office for ten years. He was not a mere copyist, but drafted state papers, and was employed to defend the Commonwealth against its critics. It was his labor over his reply to Salmasius (see page 64, note 2) that cost him his eyesight.

[3] The Popish Trials followed the absurd charges of Titus Oates that there was a Roman Catholic plot to overthrow Protestantism and murder Charles II. (1678–79). The Rye House Plot was an actual conspiracy to murder Charles and his brother James, formed by some of the baser Whigs (1683).

[4] This was Daniel Skinner, nephew of that Cyriac Skinner to whom Milton addressed his twenty-first and twenty-second sonnets. The year after Milton's death (1675) the younger Skinner tried to have the *Treatise on Christian Doctrine* and the foreign dispatches published in Holland, England not being a

On examination the large manuscript proved to be the long-lost essay on the Doctrines of Christianity, which, according to Wood and Toland,[1] Milton finished after the Restoration, and deposited with Cyriac Skinner. Skinner, it is well known, held the same political opinions with his illustrious friend. It is therefore probable, as Mr. Lemon conjectures, that he may have fallen under the suspicions of the government during that persecution of the Whigs which followed the dissolution of the Oxford Parliament;[2] and that, in consequence of a general seizure of his papers, this work may have been brought to the office in which it has been found. But whatever the adventures of the manuscript may have been, no doubt can exist that it is a genuine relic of the great poet.

Mr. Sumner,[3] who was commanded by his Majesty to edit and translate the treatise, has acquitted himself of his task in a manner honorable to his talents and to his character. His version is not, indeed,

likely place then for such an undertaking. Owing to various complications, Daniel Elzevir, the printer, delivered the manuscripts to the English authorities, who pigeon-holed them.

[1] Anthony à Wood (1632–1695), the Oxford antiquarian, gave a sketch of Milton (who though a graduate of Cambridge was admitted to the M. A. of Oxford) in his *Athenæ Oxonienses.* John Toland (1670–1722), the well-known deistical writer, published a life of Milton in 1699.

[2] Parliament met at Oxford in March, 1681, in order that the Commons might not be influenced by the citizens of London. The bill for excluding James II. from the succession was then being pressed by the Whigs. The student should look up in some good dictionary the origin of the terms "Whig" and "Tory" (loosely speaking, Liberal and Conservative).

[3] The favorite chaplain of George IV. (who paid the expenses of the edition), and afterwards Bishop of Winchester.

very easy or elegant; but it is entitled to the praise of clearness and fidelity. His notes abound with interesting quotations, and have the rare merit of really elucidating the text. The preface is evidently the work of a sensible and candid man, firm in his own religious opinions, and tolerant towards those of others.

The book itself will not add much to the fame of Milton. It is, like all his Latin works, well written, though not exactly in the style of the prize essays of Oxford and Cambridge. There is no elaborate imitation of classical antiquity, no scrupulous purity, none of the ceremonial cleanness which characterizes the diction of our academical Pharisees.[1] The author does not attempt to polish and brighten his composition into the Ciceronian gloss and brilliancy. He does not, in short, sacrifice sense and spirit to pedantic refinements. The nature of his subject compelled him to use many words

"That would have made Quintilian stare and gasp."[2]

But he writes with as much ease and freedom as if Latin were his mother tongue; and, where he is least happy, his failure seems to arise from the carelessness of a native, not from the ignorance of a foreigner. We may apply to him what Denham[3] with great feli-

[1] Macaulay means to imply that modern scholars in writing Latin pay more attention, like the Pharisees, to the external graces of style than to inward soundness of matter.

[2] From Milton's eleventh sonnet. Marcus Fabius Quintilianus (*circa* 36–96 A. D.) was a famous Roman critic and teacher of rhetoric.

[3] Sir John Denham (1615–1668) and Abraham Cowley (1618–1667), both noted poets once, and precursors of the formal school of Dryden and Pope. Some of Cowley's poems and his *Essays* ought to be read, as well as Macaulay's *Conversation between Mr.*

city says of Cowley. He wears the garb, but not the clothes, of the ancients.

Throughout the volume are discernible the traces of a powerful and independent mind, emancipated from the influence of authority, and devoted to the search of truth. Milton professes to form his system from the Bible alone; and his digest of scriptural texts is certainly among the best that have appeared. But he is not always so happy in his inferences as in his citations.

Some of the heterodox doctrines which he avows seem to have excited considerable amazement, particularly his Arianism, and his theory on the subject of polygamy. Yet we can scarcely conceive that any person could have read the "Paradise Lost" without suspecting him of the former; nor do we think that any reader, acquainted with the history of his life, ought to be much startled at the latter. The opinions which he has expressed respecting the nature of the Deity, the eternity of matter, and the observation of the Sabbath, might, we think, have caused more just surprise.[1]

But we will not go into the discussion of these points. The book, were it far more orthodox or far

Abraham Cowley and Mr. John Milton, touching the Great Civil War. The lines referred to occur in Denham's *Elegy* on Cowley, and are as follows: —

> "Horace's wit and Virgil's state
> He did not steal, but emulate,
> And when he would like them appear,
> Their garb, but not their clothes, did wear."

[1] For a fuller description of Milton's treatise, see Garnett's *Milton*, pp. 191–193. Milton did not exactly share the notions of Arius as to the nature of Christ, but was rather a semi-Arian. He tolerated polygamy on the ground that the Bible did not expressly prohibit it.

more heretical than it is, would not much edify or corrupt the present generation. The men of our time are not to be converted or perverted by quartos. A few more days and this essay will follow the "Defensio Populi"[1] to the dust and silence of the upper shelf. The name of its author, and the remarkable circumstances attending its publication, will secure to it a certain degree of attention. For a month or two it will occupy a few minutes of chat in every drawing-room, and a few columns in every magazine; and it will then, to borrow the elegant language of the play-bills, be withdrawn to make room for the forthcoming novelties.

We wish, however, to avail ourselves of the interest, transient as it may be, which this work has excited. The dexterous Capuchins[2] never choose to preach on the life and miracles of a saint till they have awakened the devotional feelings of their auditors by exhibiting some relic of him, — a thread of his garment, a lock of his hair, or a drop of his blood. On the same principle, we intend to take advantage of the late interesting discovery, and, while this memorial of a great and good man is still in the hands of all, to say something of his moral and intellectual qualities. Nor, we are convinced, will the severest of our readers blame us if, on an occasion like the present, we turn for a short time from the topics of the day to commemorate, in all love and reverence, the genius and virtues of John Milton,

[1] The Latin treatise in defense of the people of England against the criticisms of Salmasius. See page 64, note 2.

[2] The Capuchins are a branch of the Franciscan monks, founded in 1528, and so named from the long pointed capouch or cowl they wear.

the poet, the statesman, the philosopher, the glory of English literature, the champion and the martyr of English liberty.

It is by his poetry that Milton is best known, and it is of his poetry that we wish first to speak. By the general suffrage of the civilized world, his place has been assigned among the greatest masters of the art. His detractors, however, though outvoted, have not been silenced. There are many critics, and some of great name, who contrive in the same breath to extol the poems and to decry the poet. The works they acknowledge, considered in themselves, may be classed among the noblest productions of the human mind. But they will not allow the author to rank with those great men who, born in the infancy of civilization, supplied by their own powers the want of instruction; and, though destitute of models themselves, bequeathed to posterity models which defy imitation. Milton, it is said, inherited what his predecessors created: he lived in an enlightened age; he received a finished education; and we must, therefore, if we would form a just estimate of his powers, make large deductions in consideration of these advantages.

We venture to say, on the contrary, paradoxical as the remark may appear, that no poet has ever had to struggle with more unfavorable circumstances than Milton. He doubted, as he has himself owned, whether he had not been born "an age too late."[1] For this notion Johnson has thought fit to make him the butt of much clumsy ridicule.[2] The poet, we believe, understood the nature of his art better than

[1] See *Paradise Lost*, ix. 44.

[2] See Johnson's *Life of Milton*, near the middle. Macaulay's remark is hardly just to Johnson.

the critic. He knew that his poetical genius derived no advantage from the civilization which surrounded him, or from the learning which he had acquired; and he looked back with something like regret to the ruder age of simple words and vivid impressions.

We think that, as civilization advances, poetry almost necessarily declines. Therefore, though we fervently admire those great works of imagination which have appeared in dark ages, we do not admire them the more because they have appeared in dark ages. On the contrary, we hold that the most wonderful and splendid proof of genius is a great poem produced in a civilized age. We cannot understand why those who believe in that most orthodox article of literary faith, that the earliest poets are generally the best, should wonder at the rule as if it were the exception. Surely, the uniformity of the phenomenon indicates a corresponding uniformity in the cause.[1]

The fact is, that common observers reason from the progress of the experimental sciences to that of the imitative arts. The improvement of the former is gradual and slow. Ages are spent in collecting materials, ages more in separating and combining them. Even when a system has been formed, there is still something to add, to alter, or to reject. Every generation enjoys the use of a vast hoard bequeathed to it by antiquity, and transmits that hoard, augmented by fresh acquisitions, to future ages. In these pursuits, therefore, the first speculators lie under great disadvantages, and, even when they fail, are

[1] Macaulay here and elsewhere in this essay is merely expanding ideas that he had previously expressed in his article on Dante. There is some truth in his views, but many of his statements must not be accepted unreservedly.

entitled to praise. Their pupils, with far inferior intellectual powers, speedily surpass them in actual attainments. Every girl who has read Mrs. Marcet's[1] little dialogues on political economy could teach Montague[2] or Walpole[3] many lessons in finance. Any intelligent man may now, by resolutely applying himself for a few years to mathematics, learn more than the great Newton knew after half a century of study and meditation.

But it is not thus with music, with painting, or with sculpture. Still less is it thus with poetry. The progress of refinement rarely supplies these arts with better objects of imitation. It may indeed improve the instruments which are necessary to the mechanical operations of the musician, the sculptor, and the painter. But language, the machine of the poet, is best fitted for his purpose in its rudest state. Nations, like individuals, first perceive and then abstract. They advance from particular images to general terms. Hence the vocabulary of an enlightened society is philosophical; that of a half-civilized people is poetical.[4]

[1] Mrs. Jane Marcet (1769–1858) wrote a text-book for children, sufficiently described in the text. Political Economy was a favorite science in the early part of the century, and a more celebrated woman, Harriet Martineau, made it the basis for a series of tales.

[2] Charles Montague (1661–1715), afterwards Earl of Halifax, the famous chancellor of the exchequer under William III., and founder of the Bank of England. He was a patron of literary men (see the essay on Addison, page 110), and a small poet himself. He is frequently referred to in Macaulay's *History*.

[3] The great Sir Robert Walpole (1676–1745), George II.'s chief minister.

[4] Note the effect of the short sentences. The very rapidity of the argument helps to carry conviction.

This change in the language of men is partly the cause and partly the effect of a corresponding change in the nature of their intellectual operations, — of a change by which science gains and poetry loses. Generalization is necessary to the advancement of knowledge, but particularity is indispensable to the creations of the imagination. In proportion as men know more and think more, they look less at individuals and more at classes. They therefore make better theories and worse poems. They give us vague phrases instead of images, and personified qualities instead of men. They may be better able to analyze human nature than their predecessors. But analysis is not the business of the poet. His office is to portray, not to dissect. He may believe in a moral sense, like Shaftesbury;[1] he may refer all human actions to self-interest, like Helvetius;[2] or he may never think about the matter at all. His creed on such subjects will no more influence his poetry, properly so called, than the notions which a painter may have conceived respecting the lachrymal glands, or the circulation of the blood, will affect the tears of his Niobe[3] or the blushes of his Aurora. If Shakespeare had written a book on the motives of human actions, it is by no means certain that it would have

[1] Anthony Ashley Cooper (1671–1713), third Earl of Shaftesbury, is distinguished among his famous kinsmen for his *Characteristics*, once a very popular book. He ranks high as a stylist, but as a moral philosopher suffers from the neglect that attends most of the deistic writers of the period.

[2] Claude Helvétius (1715–1771), a popular French philosopher.

[3] For the famous story of Niobe, who wept herself into stone when her children were slain by Apollo and Diana, see a classical dictionary. Consult the same for legends concerning Aurora, the goddess of the dawn.

been a good one. It is extremely improbable that it would have contained half so much able reasoning on the subject as is to be found in "The Fable of the Bees." But could Mandeville [1] have created an Iago? [2] Well as he knew how to resolve characters into their elements, would he have been able to combine those elements in such a manner as to make up a man, — a real, living, individual man?

Perhaps no person can be a poet, or can even enjoy poetry, without a certain unsoundness of mind, if anything which gives so much pleasure ought to be called unsoundness. By poetry we mean not all writing in verse, nor even all good writing in verse. Our definition excludes many metrical compositions which, on other grounds, deserve the highest praise. By poetry we mean the art of employing words in such a manner as to produce an illusion on the imagination, the art of doing by means of words what the painter does by means of colors. Thus the greatest of poets has described it, in lines universally admired for the vigor and felicity of their diction, and still more valuable on account of the just notion which they convey of the art in which he excelled: —

> "As imagination bodies forth
> The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
> A local habitation and a name." [3]

These are the fruits of the "fine frenzy" which he

[1] Bernard de Mandeville (1670–1733), a satirist whose chief work — partly prose, partly verse — is named in the text. Its purpose is to show that luxury of any sort helps the laboring classes. Browning has resurrected Mandeville in his *Parleyings*.

[2] See Shakespeare's *Othello*.

[3] *Midsummer Night's Dream*, V. i. 14–17.

ascribes to the poet, — a fine frenzy, doubtless, but still a frenzy. Truth, indeed, is essential to poetry; but it is the truth of madness. The reasonings are just, but the premises are false. After the first suppositions have been made, everything ought to be consistent; but those first suppositions require a degree of credulity which almost amounts to a partial and temporary derangement of the intellect. Hence, of all people, children are the most imaginative. They abandon themselves without reserve to every illusion. Every image which is strongly presented to their mental eye produces on them the effect of reality. No man, whatever his sensibility may be, is ever affected by Hamlet or Lear as a little girl is affected by the story of poor Red Riding Hood. She knows that it is all false, that wolves cannot speak, that there are no wolves in England. Yet in spite of her knowledge she believes; she weeps; she trembles; she dares not go into a dark room lest she should feel the teeth of the monster at her throat. Such is the despotism of the imagination over uncultivated minds.

In a rude state of society, men are children with a greater variety of ideas. It is therefore in such a state of society that we may expect to find the poetical temperament in its highest perfection. In an enlightened age there will be much intelligence, much science, much philosophy, abundance of just classification and subtle analysis, abundance of wit and eloquence, abundance of verses, and even of good ones; but little poetry. Men will judge and compare, but they will not create. They will talk about the old poets, and comment on them, and to a certain degree enjoy them. But they will scarcely be able to conceive the

effect which poetry produced on their ruder ancestors, — the agony, the ecstasy, the plenitude of belief. The Greek Rhapsodists,[1] according to Plato, could scarce recite Homer without falling into convulsions. The Mohawk hardly feels the scalping-knife while he shouts his death song. The power which the ancient bards of Wales and Germany exercised over their auditors seems to modern readers almost miraculous. Such feelings are very rare in a civilized community, and most rare among those who participate most in its improvements. They linger longest among the peasantry.

Poetry produces an illusion on the eye of the mind, as a magic lantern produces an illusion on the eye of the body. And, as the magic lantern acts best in a dark room, poetry effects its purpose most completely in a dark age. As the light of knowledge breaks in upon its exhibitions, as the outlines of certainty become more and more definite, and the shades of probability more and more distinct, the hues and lineaments of the phantoms which the poet calls up grow fainter and fainter. We cannot unite the incompatible advantages of reality and deception, the clear discernment of truth, and the exquisite enjoyment of fiction.[2]

He who, in an enlightened and literary society, aspires to be a great poet, must first become a little child. He must take to pieces the whole web of his mind. He must unlearn much of that knowledge

[1] The rhapsodists were professional reciters of poems. The special reference is to Plato's *Ion*, which should be read entire in Jowett's translation.

[2] This paragraph illustrates well Macaulay's power of presenting his readers with apt and elaborated illustrations.

which has perhaps constituted hitherto his chief title to superiority. His very talents will be a hindrance to him. His difficulties will be proportioned to his proficiency in the pursuits which are fashionable among his contemporaries; and that proficiency will in general be proportioned to the vigor and activity of his mind. And it is well if, after all his sacrifices and exertions, his works do not resemble a lisping man or a modern ruin. We have seen in our own time great talents, intense labor, and long meditation employed in this struggle against the spirit of the age, and employed, we will not say absolutely in vain, but with dubious success and feeble applause.[1]

If these reasonings be just, no poet has ever triumphed over greater difficulties than Milton. He received a learned education; he was a profound and elegant classical scholar; he had studied all the mysteries of Rabbinical literature;[2] he was intimately acquainted with every language of modern Europe from which either pleasure or information was then to be derived. He was perhaps the only great poet of later times who has been distinguished by the excellence of his Latin verse. The genius of Petrarch[3] was scarcely of the first order; and his poems in the ancient language, though much praised by those who have never read them, are wretched com-

[1] The allusion is probably to Wordsworth.

[2] The term "Rabbinical literature" applies to the body of writings explanatory of the Scriptures composed by learned rabbis since the Christian era.

[3] For Francesco Petrarca (1304–1374), who is chiefly known for his Italian sonnets and his love for Laura, but who also wrote much Latin verse, and was a leader in the Revival of Learning, see Hallam's *Literature of Europe*. Macaulay had criticised Petrarch much too harshly in *Knight's Quarterly* in 1824.

positions. Cowley,[1] with all his admirable wit and ingenuity, had little imagination; nor indeed do we think his classical diction comparable to that of Milton. The authority of Johnson is against us on this point. But Johnson had studied the bad writers of the Middle Ages till he had become utterly insensible to the Augustan elegance,[2] and was as ill qualified to judge between two Latin styles as a habitual drunkard to set up for a wine-taster.

Versification in a dead language is an exotic, a far-fetched, costly, sickly imitation of that which elsewhere may be found in healthful and spontaneous perfection. The soils on which this rarity flourishes are in general as ill suited to the production of vigorous native poetry as the flower-pots of a hot-house to the growth of oaks. That the author of the "Paradise Lost" should have written the "Epistle to Manso"[3] was truly wonderful. Never before were such marked originality and such exquisite mimicry found together. Indeed, in all the Latin poems of Milton, the artificial manner indispensable to such works is admirably preserved, while, at the same time, his genius gives to them a peculiar charm, an

[1] Cowley (see page 6, note 3) wrote a good deal of Latin verse, including a long poem on plants.

[2] The age of the Emperor Augustus was marked by the flowering of Roman literary genius in Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Tibullus, etc., most of whom described the glories and upheld the measures of the reign. Hence any period similarly characterized is termed Augustan, — *e. g.*, the reigns of Queen Anne and of Louis XIV.

[3] This was a graceful poem in Latin hexameters, addressed to the celebrated Marquis Manso (1561–1645), the patron of Tasso and Marini, by Milton, who had been kindly received at Naples by the old nobleman.

air of nobleness and freedom, which distinguishes them from all other writings of the same class. They remind us of the amusements of those angelic warriors who composed the cohort of Gabriel: —

> "About him exercised heroic games
> The unarmed youth of heaven; but nigh at hand
> Celestial armory, shields, helms, and spears,
> Hung high, with diamond flaming and with gold."[1]

We cannot look upon the sportive exercises for which the genius of Milton ungirds itself, without catching a glimpse of the gorgeous and terrible panoply which it is accustomed to wear. The strength of his imagination triumphed over every obstacle. So intense and ardent was the fire of his mind that it not only was not suffocated beneath the weight of fuel, but penetrated the whole superincumbent mass with its own heat and radiance.

It is not our intention to attempt anything like a complete examination of the poetry of Milton. The public has long been agreed as to the merit of the most remarkable passages, the incomparable harmony of the numbers, and the excellence of that style which no rival has been able to equal and no parodist to degrade,[2] which displays in their highest perfection the idiomatic powers of the English tongue, and to which every ancient and every modern language has contributed something of grace, of energy, or of music.

[1] *Paradise Lost*, iv. 551–554.

[2] Milton has been parodied, for example, by Pope in *The Rape of the Lock*, by John Philips in *The Splendid Shilling*, and by Isaac Hawkins Brown in *A Pipe of Tobacco*. Perhaps the most absurd attempt to imitate him is William Mason's elegy on Pope, entitled *Musæus*, which was modeled on *Lycidas*. For English parody in general, see A. S. Martin's *On Parody*.

In the vast field of criticism on which we are entering, innumerable reapers have already put their sickles. Yet the harvest is so abundant that the negligent search of a straggling gleaner may be rewarded with a sheaf.

22 The most striking characteristic of the poetry of Milton is the extreme remoteness of the associations by means of which it acts on the reader. Its effect is produced, not so much by what it expresses, as by what it suggests; not so much by the ideas which it directly conveys, as by other ideas which are connected with them. He electrifies the mind through conductors.[1] The most unimaginative man must understand the Iliad. Homer gives him no choice, and requires from him no exertion, but takes the whole upon himself, and sets the images in so clear a light that it is impossible to be blind to them. The works of Milton cannot be comprehended or enjoyed unless the mind of the reader coöperate with that of the writer. He does not paint a finished picture, or play for a mere passive listener. He sketches, and leaves others to fill up the outline. He strikes the keynote, and expects his hearer to make out the melody.

We often hear of the magical influence of poetry. The expression in general means nothing; but, applied to the writings of Milton, it is most appropriate. His poetry acts like an incantation. Its merit lies less in its obvious meaning than in its occult power. There would seem, at first sight, to be no more in his words than in other words. But they are words of enchantment. No sooner are they pronounced than the past is present and the distant near. New forms of beauty start at once into existence, and all the

[1] Note the felicitous application of the scientific terms.

burial-places of the memory give up their dead. Change the structure of the sentence, substitute one synonym for another, and the whole effect is destroyed. The spell loses its power; and he who should then hope to conjure with it would find himself as much mistaken as Cassim in the Arabian tale, when he stood crying, "Open Wheat," "Open Barley," to the door which obeyed no sound but "Open Sesame."[1] The miserable failure of Dryden[2] in his attempt to translate into his own diction some parts of the "Paradise Lost" is a remarkable instance of this.

In support of these observations we may remark, that scarcely any passages in the poems of Milton are more generally known, or more frequently repeated, than those which are little more than muster-rolls of names.[3] They are not always more appropriate or more melodious than other names. But they are charmed names. Every one of them is the first link in a long chain of associated ideas. Like the dwelling-place of our infancy revisited in manhood, like the song of our country heard in a strange land, they produce upon us an effect wholly independent of their intrinsic value. One transports us back to a remote period of history. Another places us among the

[1] See the story of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves, in the *Arabian Nights' Entertainments.*

[2] This refers to Dryden's opera, *The State of Innocence*, based on *Paradise Lost*, with Milton's permission, it is said. Critics are agreed that the performance was unworthy of a poet who was to succeed Milton on the throne of English poetry, and to write the famous lines on him. See Ward's *English Poets* for these lines, and Macaulay's essay on Dryden, as well as the first chapter of Dr. Richard Garnett's *The Age of Dryden.*

[3] See, for example, *Paradise Lost*, i. 580–585.

novel scenes and manners of a distant region. A third evokes all the dear classical recollections of childhood, — the schoolroom, the dog-eared Virgil, the holiday, and the prize. A fourth brings before us the splendid phantoms of chivalrous romance, the trophied lists, the embroidered housings, the quaint devices, the haunted forests, the enchanted gardens, the achievements of enamored knights, and the smiles of rescued princesses.

In none of the works of Milton is his peculiar manner more happily displayed than in the "Allegro" and the "Penseroso." It is impossible to conceive that the mechanism of language can be brought to a more exquisite degree of perfection. These poems differ from others as attar of roses differs from ordinary rosewater, the close-packed essence from the thin, diluted mixture. They are, indeed, not so much poems as collections of hints, from each of which the reader is to make out a poem for himself. Every epithet is a text for a stanza.[1]

The "Comus" and the "Samson Agonistes" are works which, though of very different merit, offer some marked points of resemblance. Both are lyric poems in the form of plays. There are, perhaps, no two kinds of composition so essentially dissimilar as the drama and the ode. The business of the dramatist is to keep himself out of sight, and to let nothing appear but his characters. As soon as he attracts

[1] This bit of criticism is often quoted — generally as Macaulay first wrote it — with *canto* in place of *stanza*. The paragraph is on the whole a little extravagant, as most critics of Milton would agree that in *Lycidas* he brought the mechanism of language "to a more exquisite degree of perfection;" but it is impossible to find serious fault with praise of poems so admirable.

notice to his personal feelings, the illusion is broken. The effect is as unpleasant as that which is produced on the stage by the voice of a prompter or the entrance of a scene-shifter. Hence it was that the tragedies of Byron were his least successful performances. They resemble those pasteboard pictures invented by the friend of children, Mr. Newbery,[1] in which a single movable head goes round twenty different bodies, so that the same face looks out upon us, successively, from the uniform of a hussar, the furs of a judge, and the rags of a beggar. In all the characters, — patriots and tyrants, haters and lovers, — the frown and sneer of Harold[2] were discernible in an instant. But this species of egotism, though fatal to the drama, is the inspiration of the ode.[3] It is the part of the lyric poet to abandon himself without reserve to his own devotions.

Between these hostile elements many great men have endeavored to effect an amalgamation, but never with complete success. The Greek drama, on the model of which the "Samson" was written, sprang from the ode. The dialogue was ingrafted on the chorus, and naturally partook of its character. The genius of the greatest of the Athenian dramatists cooperated with the circumstances under which tragedy made its first appearance. Æschylus was, head and heart, a lyric poet. In his time the Greeks had far

[1] John Newbery (1713–1767), a publisher of children's books in St. Paul's Churchyard. Goldsmith was one of his writers, and paid him a tribute in *The Vicar of Wakefield.*

[2] The hero of Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage.*

[3] Macaulay seems to use "ode" in this paragraph as synonymous with lyric poetry; it is really the greatest form in which the lyrical or subjective impulse of the poet expresses itself, *e. g.*, the *Odes* of Pindar, Wordsworth's *Ode to Duty.*

more intercourse with the East than in the days of Homer; and they had not yet acquired that immense superiority in war, in science, and in the arts, which, in the following generation, led them to treat the Asiatics with contempt. From the narrative of Herodotus it should seem that they still looked up, with the veneration of disciples, to Egypt and Assyria. At this period, accordingly, it was natural that the literature of Greece should be tinctured with the Oriental style. And that style, we think, is discernible in the works of Pindar[1] and Æschylus. The latter often reminds us of the Hebrew writers. The Book of Job, indeed, in conduct and diction, bears a considerable resemblance to some of his dramas.[2] Considered as plays, his works are absurd; considered as choruses, they are above all praise. If, for instance, we examine the address of Clytemnestra to Agamemnon on his return,[3] or the description of the seven Argive chiefs,[4] by the principles of dramatic writing, we shall instantly condemn them as monstrous. But if we forget the characters, and think only of the poetry, we shall admit that it has never been surpassed in energy and magnificence. Sophocles made the Greek drama as dramatic as was consistent with its original form. His portraits of men have a sort of similarity; but it is the similarity, not of a painting, but of

[1] In connection with Pindar (522–443 B. C.) read Milton's eighth sonnet, and see Mahaffy.

[2] *Job* practically is a drama, and is so treated by modern scholars. See Moulton's edition in his *Modern Reader's Bible.*

[3] The reference is to Æschylus's greatest play, the *Agamemnon.*

[4] See Æschylus's *Seven against Thebes,* in which Thebes is besieged by seven champions from Argos ("Argive").

a bas-relief.[1] It suggests a resemblance, but it does not produce an illusion. Euripides attempted to carry the reform further. But it was a task far beyond his powers, perhaps beyond any powers. Instead of correcting what was bad, he destroyed what was excellent. He substituted crutches for stilts, bad sermons for good odes.

Milton, it is well known, admired Euripides highly, — much more highly than, in our opinion, Euripides deserved. Indeed, the caresses which this partiality leads our countryman to bestow on "sad Electra's[2] poet" sometimes remind us of the beautiful Queen of Fairyland kissing the long ears of Bottom.[3] At all events, there can be no doubt that this veneration for the Athenian, whether just or not, was injurious to the "Samson Agonistes." Had Milton taken Æschylus for his model, he would have given himself up to the lyric inspiration, and poured out profusely all the treasures of his mind, without bestowing a thought on those dramatic proprieties which the nature of the work rendered it impossible to preserve. In the attempt to reconcile things in their own nature inconsistent, he has failed, as every one else must have failed. We cannot identify ourselves with the characters, as in a good play. We cannot identify ourselves with the poet, as in a good ode. The conflicting ingredients, like an acid and an alkali mixed, neutralize each other. We are by

[1] Admirers of Antigone will not relish this statement, which is extravagant.

[2] See Milton's eighth sonnet. Macaulay subsequently modified his views as to Euripides, a poet whom Robert Browning has done much to make more popular.

[3] See *Midsummer Night's Dream*, IV. i.

no means insensible to the merits of this celebrated piece, to the severe dignity of the style, the graceful and pathetic solemnity of the opening speech, or the wild and barbaric[1] melody which gives so striking an effect to the choral passages. But we think it, we confess, the least successful effort of the genius of Milton.

The "Comus" is framed on the model of the Italian masque,[2] as the "Samson" is framed on the model of the Greek tragedy. It is certainly the noblest performance of the kind which exists in any language. It is as far superior to the "Faithful Shepherdess" as the "Faithful Shepherdess" is to the "Aminta" or the "Aminta" to the "Pastor Fido."[3] It was well for Milton that he had here no

[1] This is an eighteenth century touch, which, following after the scientific comparison, produces an odd effect. Macaulay does slight justice to the *Samson*.

[2] The Masque (or Mask) was a hybrid dramatic performance originating in Italy at the end of the fifteenth century. It combined features of the masquerade, the carnival pageant, and the drama, and was often a costly affair. Transplanted to England it flourished chiefly under James I., when the feature of good verse was added to it by Ben Jonson and others. From a literary point of view Milton's masque is confessedly the greatest extant. See J. A. Symonds's *Shakespeare and his Predecessors*.

[3] The three plays here mentioned are all of the pastoral kind, — *i. e.*, the chief personages are shepherds and shepherdesses far more artificial than natural. The *Faithful Shepherdess* is by John Fletcher (1579–1625), whose famous partner, Beaumont, had no share in what must always be regarded as one of the treasures of English literature. The *Aminta* is by Tasso (1544–1595), who is more famous for his *Jerusalem Delivered;* and the *Pastor Fido* (*Faithful Shepherd*) is by the little read Italian poet Guarini (1537–1612). It takes a careful perusal of the four pieces to enable a reader to appreciate the essential justice of Macaulay's criticism, though it may be remarked that the com-

Euripides to mislead him. He understood and loved the literature of modern Italy. But he did not feel for it the same veneration which he entertained for the remains of Athenian and Roman poetry, consecrated by so many lofty and endearing recollections. The faults, moreover, of his Italian predecessors were of a kind to which his mind had a deadly antipathy. He could stoop to a plain style, sometimes even to a bald style; but false brilliancy was his utter aversion. His Muse had no objection to a russet attire; but she turned with disgust from the finery of Guarini, as tawdry and as paltry as the rags of a chimney-sweeper on May Day.[1] Whatever ornaments she wears are of massive gold, not only dazzling to the sight, but capable of standing the severest test of the crucible.

Milton attended in the "Comus" to the distinction which he afterwards neglected in the "Samson." He made his masque what it ought to be, essentially lyrical, and dramatic only in semblance. He has not attempted a fruitless struggle against a defect inherent in the nature of that species of composition; and he has therefore succeeded, wherever success was not impossible. The speeches must be read as majestic soliloquies; and he who so reads them will be enraptured with their eloquence, their sublimity, and their music. The interruptions of the dialogue, however,

plex plot of Guarini is better than the insipidity of Tasso, and that the latter and lyric part of *Comus*, which Macaulay especially praises, would probably not have been written without Fletcher's inspiration.

[1] "They differ from them as a May-Day procession of chimney-sweepers differs from the Field of the Cloth of Gold." (Macaulay on Petrarch.) The first of May was a holiday for the *chimney-sweeps*.

impose a constraint upon the writer, and break the illusion of the reader. The finest passages are those which are lyric in form as well as in spirit. "I should much commend," said the excellent Sir Henry Wotton[1] in a letter to Milton, "the tragical part, if the lyrical did not ravish me with a certain Dorique[2] delicacy in your songs and odes, whereunto, I must plainly confess to you, I have seen yet nothing parallel in our language." The criticism was just. It is when Milton escapes from the shackles of the dialogue, when he is discharged from the labor of uniting two incongruous styles, when he is at liberty to indulge his choral raptures without reserve, that he rises even above himself. Then, like his own Good Genius bursting from the earthly form and weeds[3] of Thyrsis,[4] he stands forth in celestial freedom and beauty; he seems to cry exultingly,—

> "Now my task is smoothly done,
> I can fly, or I can run,"[5]

to skim the earth, to soar above the clouds, to bathe in the elysian dew of the rainbow, and to inhale the balmy smells of nard and cassia, which the musky

[1] Sir Henry Wotton (1568–1639), the famous Provost of Eton, and a minor poet (see Ward's *English Poets*), wrote this letter to Milton before the appearance of the anonymous edition of *Comus* in 1637.

[2] The reference is to the Doric Greek of Sicily, in which the pastorals of Theocritus (third century B. C.), the father of this species of poetry, were written.

[3] Weeds = garments.

[4] Thyrsis (a favorite name for a shepherd in classical pastorals) was the shepherd whose form the Attendant Spirit took in *Comus*.

[5] *Comus*, 1012, 1013.

wings of the zephyr scatter through the cedared alleys of the Hesperides.[1]

There are several of the minor poems of Milton on which we would willingly make a few remarks. Still more willingly would we enter into a detailed examination of that admirable poem, the "Paradise Regained," which, strangely enough, is scarcely ever mentioned except as an instance of the blindness of the parental affection which men of letters bear towards the offspring of their intellects. That Milton was mistaken in preferring this work, excellent as it is, to the "Paradise Lost," we readily admit.[2] But we are sure that the superiority of the "Paradise Lost" to the "Paradise Regained" is not more decided than the superiority of the "Paradise Regained" to every poem which has since made its appearance. Our limits, however, prevent us from discussing the point at length. We hasten on to that extraordinary production which the general suffrage of critics has placed in the highest class of human compositions.[3]

The only poem of modern times which can be compared with the "Paradise Lost" is the "Divine Comedy." The subject of Milton, in some points, resembled that of Dante; but he has treated it in a widely different manner. We cannot, we think, better illustrate our opinion respecting our own great poet, than

[1] Macaulay is here turning part of the Epilogue of *Comus* into prose. In so doing he feels bound to avoid using Milton's rare but beautiful epithet "cedarn."

[2] It is doubtful whether Milton had this preference. See Masson's introduction to the poem in the Eversley edition.

[3] Macaulay omits all reference to *Lycidas* and to the *Ode on the Nativity*. He must have appreciated them highly, but can hardly have felt the admiration for the former that is now felt by most critical lovers of poetry.

by contrasting him with the father of Tuscan literature.

The poetry of Milton differs from that of Dante as the hieroglyphics of Egypt differed from the picture-writing of Mexico.[1] The images which Dante employs speak for themselves; they stand simply for what they are. Those of Milton have a signification which is often discernible only to the initiated. Their value depends less on what they directly represent than on what they remotely suggest. However strange, however grotesque, may be the appearance which Dante undertakes to describe, he never shrinks from describing it. He gives us the shape, the color, the sound, the smell, the taste; he counts the numbers; he measures the size. His similes are the illustrations of a traveler. Unlike those of other poets, and especially of Milton, they are introduced in a plain, business-like manner; not for the sake of any beauty in the objects from which they are drawn, not for the sake of any ornament which they may impart to the poem, but simply in order to make the meaning of the writer as clear to the reader as it is to himself. The ruins of the precipice which led from the sixth to the seventh circle of hell were like those of the rock which fell into the Adige[2] on the south of Trent. The cataract of Phlegethon[3] was like that of

[1] Macaulay means that Milton represents things symbolically, Dante directly, as though he were painting a picture of each object.

[2] The Adige is a large river traversing Northern Italy. Trent, the capital of the Italian Tyrol, is situated on its banks. See *Inferno*, xii. 5.

[3] Phlegethon — the burning river — one of the streams of Hades.

Aqua Cheta at the monastery of St. Benedict.[1] The place where the heretics were confined in burning tombs resembled the vast cemetery of Arles.[2]

Now let us compare with the exact details of Dante the dim intimations of Milton. We will cite a few examples. The English poet has never thought of taking the measure of Satan. He gives us merely a vague idea of vast bulk. In one passage the fiend lies stretched out, huge in length, floating many a rood, equal in size to the earth-born enemies of Jove, or to the sea monster which the mariner mistakes for an island.[3] When he addresses himself to battle against the guardian angels, he stands like Teneriffe or Atlas; his stature reaches the sky. Contrast with these descriptions the lines in which Dante has described the gigantic spectre of Nimrod:[4] "His face seemed to me as long and as broad as the ball of St. Peter's at Rome, and his other limbs were in proportion; so that the bank, which concealed him from the waist downwards, nevertheless showed so much of him that three tall Germans would in vain have attempted to reach to his hair." We are sensible that

[1] Aqua Cheta is a river of Romagna. St. Benedict was the celebrated founder of the Benedictine monks (born 480 A. D.). See *Inferno*, xvi. 97.

[2] Arles is in France (Provence), near the mouth of the Rhone. See *Inferno*, ix. 112.

[3] *Paradise Lost*, i. 194 ; iv. 985.

[4] Nimrod. See Genesis x. 8–12. The mighty hunter who figures as the founder of the Assyrio-Babylonian Empire. The passage translated is from the *Inferno*, xxxi. 58–64. Dante does not say "ball," but "pine," referring to a pine cone of bronze, which was taken from Hadrian's Mole and set in front of the old St. Peter's, but is now in the Vatican garden. So also he says Frieslanders, not Germans, on account of the fact that the former were supposed to be tall.

we do no justice to the admirable style of the Florentine poet. But Mr. Cary's[1] translation is not at hand; and our version, however rude, is sufficient to illustrate our meaning.

Once more, compare the lazar house[2] in the eleventh book of the "Paradise Lost" with the last ward of Malebolge[3] in Dante. Milton avoids the loathsome details, and takes refuge in indistinct but solemn and tremendous imagery: Despair hurrying from couch to couch to mock the wretches with his attendance; Death shaking his dart over them, but, in spite of supplications, delaying to strike. What says Dante? "There was such a moan there as there would be if all the sick who, between July and September, are in the hospitals of Valdichiana, and of the Tuscan swamps, and of Sardinia, were in one pit together; and such a stench was issuing forth as is wont to issue from decayed limbs."[4]

We will not take upon ourselves the invidious office of settling precedency between two such writers. Each in his own department is incomparable; and each, we may remark, has wisely, or fortunately, taken a subject adapted to exhibit his peculiar talent to the greatest advantage. "The Divine Comedy" is a personal narrative. Dante is the eye-witness and ear-witness of that which he relates. He is the very

[1] Henry Francis Cary (1772–1844), whose blank verse translation of Dante is still popular, although many poets, including Longfellow, have essayed the task in whole or in part.

[2] *Paradise Lost*, xi. 477 *seq.* *Lazar-house*, a hospital. (Cf. Lazarus.)

[3] Malebolge, the name given to the eighth circle of Hell. It is about equivalent to "Horrible Place." *Inferno*, xviii. 1.

[4] *Inferno*, xxix. 46–51. Valdichiana, a region in Tuscany now more salubrious than in Dante's time.

man who has heard the tormented spirits crying out for the second death;[1] who has read the dusky characters[2] on the portal within which there is no hope; who has hidden his face from the terrors of the Gorgon;[3] who has fled from the hooks and the seething pitch of Barbariccia and Draghignazzo.[4] His own hands have grasped the shaggy sides of Lucifer.[5] His own feet have climbed the mountain of expiation.[6] His own brow has been marked by the purifying angel.[7] The reader would throw aside such a tale in incredulous disgust unless it were told with the strongest air of veracity; with a sobriety even in its horrors; with the greatest precision and multiplicity in its details. The narrative of Milton in this respect differs from that of Dante, as the adventures of Amadis differ from those of Gulliver.[8] The author of "Amadis" would have made his book ridiculous if he had introduced those minute particulars which give such a charm to the work of Swift, — the nautical observations, the affected delicacy about names, the official documents transcribed at full length, and

[1] That is, for the death of the soul. *Inferno*, i. 117.

[2] The famous "Lasciate ogni Speranza, voi ch' entrate," "All hope abandon, ye who enter here." *Inferno*, iii. 9.

[3] See *Inferno*, ix. 56.

[4] The names of fiends. *Inferno*, xxi. 120, 121.

[5] See the last canto of the *Inferno*.

[6] That is, the Mount of Purgatory.

[7] *Purgatorio*, ix. 112. The angel at the entrance of Purgatory marks Dante's forehead with seven *P's* (*peccata*) for the Seven Deadly Sins. The marks disappear as he mounts upward.

[8] The hero of a once highly popular romance of chivalry, entitled *Amadis of Gaul*, a Spanish work of the fourteenth century, though perhaps first written in Portuguese by Vasco Lobeira (died 1403). A French origin has also been claimed. Southey's condensed translation may be consulted.

all the unmeaning gossip and scandal of the court, springing out of nothing, and tending to nothing. We are not shocked at being told that a man who lived, nobody knows when, saw many very strange sights, and we can easily abandon ourselves to the illusion of the romance. But when Lemuel Gulliver, surgeon, resident at Rotherhithe, tells us of pygmies and giants, flying islands, and philosophizing horses, nothing but such circumstantial touches could produce for a single moment a deception on the imagination.

Of all the poets who have introduced into their works the agency of supernatural beings, Milton has succeeded best. Here Dante decidedly yields to him; and, as this is a point on which many rash and ill-considered judgments have been pronounced, we feel inclined to dwell on it a little longer. The most fatal error which a poet can possibly commit in the management of his machinery is that of attempting to philosophize too much. Milton has been often censured for ascribing to spirits many functions of which spirits must be incapable. But these objections, though sanctioned by eminent names, originate, we venture to say, in profound ignorance of the art of poetry.

What is spirit? What are our own minds, the portion of spirit with which we are best acquainted? We observe certain phenomena. We cannot explain them into material causes. We therefore infer that there exists something which is not material. But of this something we have no idea. We can define it only by negatives. We can reason about it only by symbols. We use the word, but we have no image of the thing; and the business of poetry is with images, and not with words. The poet uses words in-

deed; but they are merely the instruments of his art, not its objects. They are the materials which he is to dispose in such a manner as to present a picture to the mental eye. And if they are not so disposed, they are no more entitled to be called poetry than a bale of canvas and a box of colors to be called a painting.

Logicians may reason about abstractions, but the great mass of men must have images. The strong tendency of the multitude in all ages and nations to idolatry can be explained on no other principle. The first inhabitants of Greece, there is reason to believe, worshiped one invisible Deity.[1] But the necessity of having something more definite to adore produced, in a few centuries, the innumerable crowd of gods and goddesses. In like manner the ancient Persians thought it impious to exhibit the Creator under a human form. Yet even these transferred to the sun the worship which, in speculation, they considered due only to the Supreme Mind. The history of the Jews is the record of a continued struggle between pure Theism, supported by the most terrible sanctions, and the strangely fascinating desire of having some visible and tangible object of adoration. Perhaps none of the secondary causes which Gibbon[2] has assigned for the rapidity with which Christianity spread over the world, while Judaism scarcely ever acquired a proselyte, operated more powerfully than this feeling. God, the uncreated, the incomprehensible, the invisible, attracted few worshipers. A philosopher might admire so noble a conception, but

[1] Modern scholars would not all agree with this statement.

[2] See the famous and much censured sixteenth chapter of the *Decline and Fall.*

the crowd turned away in disgust from words which presented no image to their minds. It was before Deity embodied in a human form, walking among men, partaking of their infirmities, leaning on their bosoms, weeping over their graves, slumbering in the manger, bleeding on the cross, that the prejudices of the Synagogue, and the doubts of the Academy, and the pride of the Portico, and the fasces of the Lictor, and the swords of thirty legions, were humbled in the dust.[1] Soon after Christianity had achieved its triumph, the principle which had assisted it began to corrupt it. It became a new paganism. Patron saints assumed the offices of household gods. St. George[2] took the place of Mars. St. Elmo[3] consoled the mariner for the loss of Castor and Pollux. The Virgin Mother and Cecilia[4] succeeded to Venus and the Muses. The fascination of sex and loveliness was again joined to that of celestial dignity, and the

[1] That is, the prejudices of Jews, Greek philosophers (Plato and Aristotle taught in the grove of *Academos*, and Zeno, founder of the Stoics, in the *Porch*), and Roman magistrates and soldiers yielded to the humane character of Christ. The *lictor* was the attendant of Roman executives, and carried the badge of authority, — the *fasces*, an axe in a bundle of rods.

[2] St. George of Cappadocia, who by a curious process became the patron saint of England.

[3] St. Elmo, the patron saint of Italian sailors, gave his name to the electric light seen on the masts and yards of ships, which phenomenon had been once attributed to the Dioscuri, *i. e.*, Castor and Pollux.

[4] St. Cecilia, the patron saint of church music. Martyred, according to the very doubtful legend, about 230 A. D. The story goes that she invented the organ, and so a yearly musical festival is held in England on her day (November 22). The lover of poetry will always associate her with Dryden's two noble odes.

homage of chivalry was blended with that of religion. Reformers have often made a stand against these feelings, but never with more than apparent and partial success. The men who demolished the images in cathedrals have not always been able to demolish those which were enshrined in their minds. It would not be difficult to show that in politics the same rule holds good. Doctrines, we are afraid, must generally be embodied before they can excite a strong public feeling. The multitude is more easily interested for the most unmeaning badge, or the most insignificant name, than for the most important principle.

From these considerations we infer that no poet, who should affect that metaphysical accuracy for the want of which Milton has been blamed, would escape a disgraceful failure. Still, however, there was another extreme which, though far less dangerous, was also to be avoided. The imaginations of men are in a great measure under the control of their opinions. The most exquisite art of poetical coloring can produce no illusion when it is employed to represent that which is at once perceived to be incongruous and absurd. Milton wrote in an age of philosophers and theologians. It was necessary, therefore, for him to abstain from giving such a shock to their understandings as might break the charm which it was his object to throw over their imaginations. This is the real explanation of the indistinctness and inconsistency with which he has often been reproached. Dr. Johnson acknowledges that it was absolutely necessary that the spirits should be clothed with material forms. "But," says he, "the poet should have secured the consistency of his system by keeping

immateriality out of sight, and seducing the reader to drop it from his thoughts."[1] This is easily said; but what if Milton could not seduce his readers to drop immateriality from their thoughts? What if the contrary opinion had taken so full a possession of the minds of men as to leave no room even for the half belief which poetry requires? Such we suspect to have been the case. It was impossible for the poet to adopt altogether the material or the immaterial system. He therefore took his stand on the debatable ground. He left the whole in ambiguity. He has doubtless, by so doing, laid himself open to the charge of inconsistency. But, though philosophically in the wrong, we cannot but believe that he was poetically in the right. This task, which almost any other writer would have found impracticable, was easy to him. The peculiar art which he possessed of communicating his meaning circuitously through a long succession of associated ideas, and of intimating more than he expressed, enabled him to disguise those incongruities which he could not avoid.

Poetry which relates to the beings of another world ought to be at once mysterious and picturesque. That of Milton is so. That of Dante is picturesque, indeed, beyond any that ever was written. Its effect approaches to that produced by the pencil or the chisel. But it is picturesque to the exclusion of all mystery. This is a fault on the right side, a fault inseparable from the plan of Dante's poem, which, as we have already observed, rendered the utmost accuracy of description necessary. Still it is a fault. The supernatural agents excite an interest, but it is not the interest which is proper to supernatural

[1] From the *Life of Milton*, toward the close.

agents. We feel that we could talk to the ghosts and demons without any emotion of unearthly awe. We could, like Don Juan, ask them to supper, and eat heartily in their company.[1] Dante's angels are good men with wings. His devils are spiteful, ugly executioners. His dead men are merely living men in strange situations. The scene which passes between the poet and Farinata is justly celebrated. Still, Farinata in the burning tomb is exactly what Farinata would have been at an *auto da fé*.[2] Nothing can be more touching than the first interview of Dante and Beatrice.[3] Yet what is it but a lovely woman chiding, with sweet, austere composure, the lover for whose affection she is grateful, but whose vices she reprobates? The feelings which give the passage its charm would suit the streets of Florence as well as the summit of the Mount of Purgatory.

The spirits of Milton are unlike those of almost all other writers. His fiends, in particular, are wonderful creations. They are not metaphysical abstractions. They are not wicked men. They are not ugly beasts. They have no horns, no tails, none of the fee-faw-fum of Tasso and Klopstock.[4] They have just enough in common with human nature to be intelligible to human beings. Their characters are, like their forms, marked by a certain dim resemblance to those of men, but exaggerated to gigantic dimensions, and veiled in mysterious gloom.

[1] Refers to a scene in Mozart's opera of this name.

[2] *Inferno*, x. 32.

[3] Beatrice Portinari, Dante's early love, who meets him in Purgatory and guides him through Paradise.

[4] Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock (1724–1803), author of the *Messias*, who is generally, but with much exaggeration, called the German Milton.

Perhaps the gods and dæmons[1] of Æschylus may best bear a comparison with the angels and devils of Milton. The style of the Athenian had, as we have remarked, something of the Oriental character; and the same peculiarity may be traced in his mythology. It has nothing of the amenity and elegance which we generally find in the superstitions of Greece. All is rugged, barbaric, and colossal. The legends of Æschylus seem to harmonize less with the fragrant groves and graceful porticos, in which his countrymen paid their vows to the God of Light and Goddess of Desire, than with those huge and grotesque labyrinths of eternal granite in which Egypt enshrined her mystic Osiris, or in which Hindostan still bows down to her seven-headed idols. His favorite gods are those of the elder generation, the sons of heaven and earth, compared with whom Jupiter himself was a stripling and an upstart, — the gigantic Titans and the inexorable Furies. Foremost among his creations of this class stands Prometheus, half fiend, half redeemer, the friend of man, the sullen and implacable enemy of Heaven. Prometheus bears undoubtedly a considerable resemblance to the Satan of Milton. In both we find the same impatience of control, the same ferocity, the same unconquerable pride. In both characters, also, are mingled, though in very different proportions, some kind and generous feelings. Prometheus, however, is hardly superhuman enough. He talks too much of his chains and his uneasy posture; he is rather too much depressed and agitated. His resolution seems to depend on the knowledge which he possesses that he holds the fate of his tor-

[1] A Greek word for "spirit," not to be confused with "demons" used in a bad sense. Prometheus was a dæmon.

turer in his hands, and that the hour of his release will surely come. But Satan is a creature of another sphere. The might of his intellectual nature is victorious over the extremity of pain. Amidst agonies which cannot be conceived without horror, he deliberates, resolves, and even exults. Against the sword of Michael, against the thunder of Jehovah, against the flaming lake and the marl burning with solid fire, against the prospect of an eternity of unintermitted misery, his spirit bears up unbroken, resting on its own innate energies, requiring no support from anything external, nor even from hope itself.[1]

To return for a moment to the parallel which we have been attempting to draw between Milton and Dante, we would add that the poetry of these great men has in a considerable degree taken its character from their moral qualities. They are not egotists. They rarely obtrude their idiosyncrasies on their readers. They have nothing in common with those modern beggars for fame who extort a pittance from the compassion of the inexperienced by exposing the nakedness and sores of their minds. Yet it would be difficult to name two writers whose works have been more completely, though undesignedly, colored by their personal feelings.

The character of Milton was peculiarly distinguished by loftiness of spirit, that of Dante by intensity of feeling. In every line of the "Divine Comedy" we discern the asperity which is produced by pride struggling with misery. There is perhaps no work in the world so deeply and uniformly sorrowful. The melancholy of Dante was no fantastic caprice. It was not, as far as at this distance of time

[1] See *Paradise Lost*, vi.

can be judged, the effect of external circumstances. It was from within. Neither love nor glory, neither the conflicts of earth nor the hope of heaven, could dispel it. It turned every consolation and every pleasure into its own nature. It resembled that noxious Sardinian soil of which the intense bitterness is said to have been perceptible even in its honey. His mind was, in the noble language of the Hebrew poet, "a land of darkness, as darkness itself, and where the light was as darkness."[1] The gloom of his character discolors all the passions of men and all the face of nature, and tinges with its own livid hue the flowers of Paradise and the glories of the eternal throne. All the portraits of him are singularly characteristic. No person can look on the features, noble even to ruggedness, the dark furrows of the cheek, the haggard and woeful stare of the eye, the sullen and contemptuous curve of the lip, and doubt that they belong to a man too proud and too sensitive to be happy.

Milton was, like Dante, a statesman and a lover; and, like Dante, he had been unfortunate in ambition and in love. He had survived his health and his sight, the comforts of his home, and the prosperity of his party. Of the great men by whom he had been distinguished at his entrance into life, some had been taken away from the evil to come; some had carried into foreign climates their unconquerable hatred of oppression; some were pining in dungeons; and some had poured forth their blood on scaffolds. Venal and licentious scribblers, with just sufficient talent to clothe the thoughts of a pandar in the style of a bellman, were now the favorite writers of the sovereign

[1] Job x. 22.

and of the public.[1] It was a loathsome herd, which could be compared to nothing so fitly as to the rabble of "Comus," — grotesque monsters, half bestial, half human, dropping with wine, bloated with gluttony, and reeling in obscene dances. Amidst these that fair Muse was placed, like the chaste lady of the masque, lofty, spotless, and serene, to be chattered at, and pointed at, and grinned at, by the whole rout of satyrs and goblins. If ever despondency and asperity could be excused in any man, they might have been excused in Milton. But the strength of his mind overcame every calamity. Neither blindness, nor gout, nor age, nor penury, nor domestic afflictions, nor political disappointments, nor abuse, nor proscription, nor neglect, had power to disturb his sedate and majestic patience. His spirits do not seem to have been high, but they were singularly equable. His temper was serious, perhaps stern; but it was a temper which no sufferings could render sullen or fretful. Such as it was when, on the eve of great events, he returned from his travels, in the prime of health and manly beauty, loaded with literary distinctions and glowing with patriotic hopes, — such it continued to be when, after having experienced every calamity which is incident to our nature, old, poor, sightless, and disgraced, he retired to his hovel to die.[2]

Hence it was that, though he wrote the "Paradise

[1] To state, as Macaulay practically does, that the leading writers of Charles II.'s reign were as lacking in the graces of style as they were in moral soundness of subject-matter is, to say the least, extravagant.

[2] *Hovel* is an exaggeration, though Milton did die poor and in retirement. Notice the manner in which this sentence is balanced.

Lost" at a time of life when images of beauty and tenderness are in general beginning to fade, even from those minds in which they have not been effaced by anxiety and disappointment, he adorned it with all that is most lovely and delightful in the physical and in the moral world. Neither Theocritus nor Ariosto[1] had a finer or a more healthful sense of the pleasantness of external objects, or loved better to luxuriate amidst sunbeams and flowers, the songs of nightingales, the juice of summer fruits, and the coolness of shady fountains. His conception of love unites all the voluptuousness of the Oriental harem, and all the gallantry of the chivalric tournament, with all the pure and quiet affection of an English fireside.[2] His poetry reminds us of the miracles of Alpine scenery. Nooks and dells beautiful as fairy-land are embosomed in its most rugged and gigantic elevations. The roses and myrtles bloom unchilled on the verge of the avalanche.

Traces, indeed, of the peculiar character of Milton may be found in all his works, but it is most strongly displayed in the Sonnets. Those remarkable poems have been undervalued by critics who have not understood their nature. They have no epigrammatic point. There is none of the ingenuity of Filicaja[3] in

[1] Ariosto (1474–1533), the great Italian poet of chivalry, author of the *Orlando Furioso*. He was a favorite of Macaulay's.

[2] Matthew Arnold, in his essay entitled *A French Critic on Milton*, very properly finds fault with this remarkable statement, but is too polite to call it nonsense.

[3] Vincenzo da Filicaia (1642–1707), a Florentine poet and scholar, whose odes on Sobieski's rescue of Vienna were much admired, and secured him high official station. For Macaulay's estimate of him see the essay on Addison.

the thought, none of the hard and brilliant enamel[1] of Petrarch in the style. They are simple but majestic records of the feelings of the poet, as little tricked out for the public eye as his diary would have been. A victory, an expected attack upon the city, a momentary fit of depression or exultation, a jest thrown out against one of his books, a dream which for a short time restored to him that beautiful face over which the grave had closed forever,[2] led him to musings which, without effort, shaped themselves into verse. The unity of sentiment and severity of style which characterize these little pieces remind us of the Greek Anthology,[3] or perhaps still more of the Collects of the English Liturgy. The noble poem on the Massacres of Piedmont is strictly a collect in verse.[4]

The Sonnets are more or less striking, according as the occasions which gave birth to them are more or less interesting. But they are, almost without exception, dignified by a sobriety and greatness of mind to which we know not where to look for a parallel. It would, indeed, be scarcely safe to draw any decided inferences as to the character of a writer from pas-

[1] It would be, perhaps, difficult to find more inappropriate epithets for Petrarch's style.

[2] Sonnet xxiii., a beautiful tribute to his second wife, Katherine Woodcock, whom Milton probably never saw. The other sonnets referred to are probably, in order, Nos. xv., viii., xix., xx., and xi.–xii.

[3] The great collection of Greek nosegays of poetry, as the name implies, — which was successively added to from 100 B. C. to the fourteenth century, A. D. It has served as a mine for translators. See the selections from it in the *Canterbury Poets*.

[4] This is one of the most felicitous bits of criticism to be found in Macaulay's writings.

sages directly egotistical. But the qualities which we have ascribed to Milton, though perhaps most strongly marked in those parts of his works which treat of his personal feelings, are distinguishable in every page, and impart to all his writings, prose and poetry, English, Latin, and Italian, a strong family likeness.

His public conduct was such as was to be expected from a man of a spirit so high and of an intellect so powerful. He lived at one of the most memorable eras in the history of mankind, — at the very crisis of the great conflict between Oromasdes and Arimanes,[1] liberty and despotism, reason and prejudice. That great battle was fought for no single generation, for no single land. The destinies of the human race were staked on the same cast with the freedom of the English people. Then were first proclaimed those mighty principles which have since worked their way into the depths of the American forests, which have roused Greece from the slavery and degradation of two thousand years, and which, from one end of Europe to the other, have kindled an unquenchable fire in the hearts of the oppressed, and loosed the knees of the oppressors with an unwonted fear.

Of those principles, then struggling for their infant existence, Milton was the most devoted and eloquent literary champion. We need not say how much we

[1] Persian deities representing the principles of good and evil, light and darkness, respectively. Macaulay's partisanship here is too obvious to need comment, but it should be noted that the recent founding of the South American republics that had cast off the yoke of Spain, the contemporary struggle of Greece against Turkey, and the repressive measures of the Holy Alliance naturally gave a militant tone to his intense Whig prejudices.

admire his public conduct. But we cannot disguise from ourselves that a large portion of his countrymen still think it unjustifiable. The Civil War, indeed, has been more discussed, and is less understood, than any event in English history. The friends of liberty labored under the disadvantage of which the lion in the fable complained so bitterly.[1] Though they were the conquerors, their enemies were the painters. As a body, the Roundheads had done their utmost to decry and ruin literature; and literature was even with them, as, in the long run, it always is with its enemies. The best book on their side of the question is the charming narrative of Mrs. Hutchinson. May's "History of the Parliament" is good, but it breaks off at the most interesting crisis of the struggle. The performance of Ludlow is foolish and violent; and most of the later writers who have espoused the same cause — Oldmixon, for instance, and Catherine Macaulay — have, to say the least, been more distinguished by zeal than either by candor or by skill.[2]

[1] See *Spectator* No. 11.

[2] The writers here enumerated on the popular side of the great controversy between the Parliament and the King are sufficiently characterized by Macaulay, and little more information need be given about them. Mrs. Lucy Hutchinson (1620–1659) was a very scholarly woman who wrote a life of her husband, Col. John Hutchinson, a parliamentary soldier and a fine character. The book was first printed in 1806. Thomas May (1594–1650) was a well educated man who, besides his history (which went down to 1643), wrote several plays. The memoirs of General Edmund Ludlow (1620–1693) are considered valuable by some critics. John Oldmixon (1673–1742) was a Whig pamphleteer, satirized by Pope, who wrote a *Critical History of England*. Finally Mrs. Catherine Macaulay (1733–1791) was a violent republican who wrote an eight-volume history beginning at the reign of James I.

On the other side are the most authoritative and the most popular historical works in our language, — that of Clarendon and that of Hume. The former is not only ably written and full of valuable information, but has also an air of dignity and sincerity which makes even the prejudices and errors with which it abounds respectable. Hume, from whose fascinating narrative the great mass of the reading public are still contented to take their opinions, hated religion so much that he hated liberty for having been allied with religion, and has pleaded the cause of tyranny with the dexterity of an advocate, while affecting the impartiality of a judge.

The public conduct of Milton must be approved or condemned, according as the resistance of the people to Charles I. shall appear to be justifiable or criminal. We shall therefore make no apology for dedicating a few pages to the discussion of that interesting and most important question. We shall not argue it on general grounds. We shall not recur to those primary principles from which the claim of any government to the obedience of its subjects is to be deduced. We are entitled to that vantage-ground, but we will relinquish it. We are, on this point, so confident of superiority that we are not unwilling to imitate the ostentatious generosity of those ancient knights who vowed to joust without helmet or shield against all enemies, and to give their antagonists the advantage of sun and wind. We will take the naked constitutional question. We confidently affirm that every reason which can be urged in favor of the Revolution of 1688 may be urged with at least equal force in favor of what is called the Great Rebellion.

In one respect only, we think, can the warmest

admirers of Charles venture to say that he was a better sovereign than his son. He was not, in name and profession, a Papist; we say in name and profession, because both Charles himself and his creature Laud,[1] while they abjured the innocent badges of Popery, retained all its worst vices, — a complete subjection of reason to authority, a weak preference of form to substance, a childish passion for mummeries, an idolatrous veneration for the priestly character, and, above all, a merciless intolerance. This, however, we waive. We will concede that Charles was a good Protestant, but we say that his Protestantism does not make the slightest distinction between his case and that of James.

The principles of the Revolution have often been grossly misrepresented, and never more than in the course of the present year. There is a certain class of men who, while they profess to hold in reverence the great names and great actions of former times, never look at them for any other purpose than in order to find in them some excuse for existing abuses.[2] In every venerable precedent they pass by what is essential and take only what is accidental; they keep out of sight what is beneficial, and hold up to public imitation all that is defective. If, in any part of any great example, there be anything unsound, these flesh flies detect it with an unerring instinct, and dart upon

[1] William Laud (1573–1645), Archbishop of Canterbury, and one of the chief advisers of Charles I. against the popular party who finally caused his execution, was so obnoxious to Macaulay that it will not do to accept unreservedly anything that the historian says of him.

[2] Macaulay here refers to the opponents of the measures proposed for the relief of Roman Catholics from political disabilities, a consummation obtained in 1829.

it with a ravenous delight. If some good end has been attained in spite of them, they feel, with their prototype, that their

> "Labor must be to pervert that end,
> And out of good still to find means of evil."[1]

To the blessings which England has derived from the Revolution these people are utterly insensible. The expulsion of a tyrant, the solemn recognition of popular rights, — liberty, security, toleration, — all go for nothing with them. One sect[2] there was which, from unfortunate temporary causes, it was thought necessary to keep under close restraint. One part of the empire[3] there was so unhappily circumstanced that at that time its misery was necessary to our happiness, and its slavery to our freedom. These are the parts of the Revolution which the politicians of whom we speak love to contemplate, and which seem to them, not indeed to vindicate, but in some degree to palliate, the good which it has produced. Talk to them of Naples, of Spain, or of South America: they stand forth zealots for the doctrine of Divine Right,[4] which has now come back to us, like a thief from transportation,[5] under the *alias* of Legi-

[1] *Paradise Lost*, i. 164, 165.

[2] Roman Catholics.

[3] Ireland.

[4] The gist of the doctrine of the Divine Right of Kings, which was held by High Churchmen and Tories throughout the Stuart period, is that the king is the father of his people and holds his authority from God, not, as nearly all nations now believe, from the consent of the governed. Hence resistance to the king was more than a crime against the state, — it was a crime against God.

[5] The practice of transporting convicts to Australia did not cease till 1852.

timacy. But mention the miseries of Ireland. Then William[1] is a hero. Then Somers and Shrewsbury[2] are great men. Then the Revolution is a glorious era! The very same persons who, in this country, never omit an opportunity of reviving every wretched Jacobite[3] slander respecting the Whigs of that period, have no sooner crossed St. George's Channel than they begin to fill their bumpers to the glorious and immortal memory.[4] They may truly boast that they look not at men, but at measures. So that evil be done, they care not who does it; the arbitrary Charles or the liberal William, Ferdinand the Catholic or Frederick the Protestant.[5] On such occasions their deadliest opponents may reckon upon their candid construction. The bold assertions of these people have of late impressed a large portion of the public with an opinion that James II. was expelled simply because he was a Catholic, and that the Revolution was essentially a Protestant revolution.

But this certainly was not the case, nor can any person who has acquired more knowledge of the history of those times than is to be found in Goldsmith's

[1] William III. — certainly Macaulay's hero in the *History*.

[2] John, Lord Somers (1652–1716), and Charles Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury (1660–1718), took leading parts in the Revolution of 1688 and were Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State respectively under William. Somers ranks high as a publicist and is a favorite of Macaulay's.

[3] The Jacobites were the adherents of James II. (Latin *Jacobus*).

[4] Of William III. — the regular Whig toast.

[5] Charles I. and William III., oppressors of England and Ireland respectively, and the reigning sovereigns of Spain and Prussia, oppressors of their peoples in 1825, alike appeal, so Macaulay thinks and avers, to his own political opponents.

"Abridgment" believe that, if James had held his own religious opinions without wishing to make proselytes, or if, wishing even to make proselytes, he had contented himself with exerting only his constitutional influence for that purpose, the Prince of Orange would ever have been invited over. Our ancestors, we suppose, knew their own meaning; and, if we may believe them, their hostility was primarily, not to Popery, but to tyranny. They did not drive out a tyrant because he was a Catholic, but they excluded Catholics from the Crown because they thought them likely to be tyrants. The ground on which they, in their famous resolution,[1] declared the throne vacant, was this: "that James had broken the fundamental laws of the kingdom." Every man, therefore, who approves of the Revolution of 1688 must hold that the breach of fundamental laws on the part of the sovereign justifies resistance. The question, then, is this: Had Charles I. broken the fundamental laws of England?

No person can answer in the negative unless he refuses credit, not merely to all the accusations brought against Charles by his opponents, but to the narratives of the warmest Royalists, and to the confessions of the king himself. If there be any truth in any historian of any party who has related the events of that reign, the conduct of Charles, from his accession to the meeting of the Long Parliament,[2] had been a continued course of oppression and treachery. Let those who applaud the Revolution and condemn the Rebellion mention one act of James II. to which

[1] Resolution of Parliament in 1689.

[2] It continued from 1640 to 1660, with an intermission under Cromwell.

a parallel is not to be found in the history of his father. Let them lay their fingers on a single article in the Declaration of Right, presented by the two houses to William and Mary, which Charles is not acknowledged to have violated. He had, according to the testimony of his own friends, usurped the functions of the legislature, raised taxes without the consent of Parliament, and quartered troops on the people in the most illegal and vexatious manner. Not a single session of Parliament had passed without some unconstitutional attack on the freedom of debate. The right of petition was grossly violated. Arbitrary judgments, exorbitant fines, and unwarranted imprisonments were grievances of daily occurrence. If these things do not justify resistance, the Revolution was treason; if they do, the great Rebellion was laudable.

But, it is said, why not adopt milder measures? Why, after the king had consented to so many reforms and renounced so many oppressive prerogatives, did the Parliament continue to rise in their demands at the risk of provoking a civil war? The ship money[1] had been given up, the Star Chamber[2] had been abolished, provision had been made for the frequent convocation and secure deliberation of Parliaments. Why not pursue an end confessedly good by peaceable and regular means? We recur again to the analogy of the Revolution. Why was James driven from the throne? Why was he not retained

[1] *Ship money* refers to the illegal endeavor of Charles I. to raise money by enforcing old and obsolete precedents with regard to the furnishing of ships by the seaport towns.

[2] For this peculiar, extra-constitutional court, used by the king and his ministers as an instrument of tyranny, see Green.

upon conditions? He, too, had offered to call a free Parliament, and to submit to its decision all the matters in dispute. Yet we are in the habit of praising our forefathers, who preferred a revolution, a disputed succession, a dynasty of strangers, twenty years of foreign and intestine war, a standing army, and a national debt, to the rule, however restricted, of a tried and proved tyrant.[1] The Long Parliament acted on the same principle, and is entitled to the same praise. They could not trust the king. He had, no doubt, passed salutary laws; but what assurance was there that he would not break them? He had renounced oppressive prerogatives, but where was the security that he would not resume them? The nation had to deal with a man whom no tie could bind; a man who made and broke promises with equal facility; a man whose honor had been a hundred times pawned and never redeemed.

Here, indeed, the Long Parliament stands on still stronger ground than the Convention of 1688. No action of James can be compared to the conduct of Charles with respect to the Petition of Right.[2] The Lords and Commons present him with a bill in which the constitutional limits of his power are marked out. He hesitates; he evades; at last he bargains to give

[1] Macaulay is here epitomizing the history of England during the generation after the Revolution. He refers to the claims of the exiled Stuarts, to the preference of the early Hanoverians for Germany, to the wars with Louis XIV., and in Ireland and Scotland to the permanent army which William's foreign policy necessitated, and to the issuing of bonds to meet the expenses of his government.

[2] Presented to Charles I. in 1628, petitioning against taxation without consent of Parliament, unlawful imprisonments, quartering of troops, etc.; a most important document.

his assent for five subsidies. The bill receives his solemn assent; the subsidies are voted; but no sooner is the tyrant relieved than he returns at once to all the arbitrary measures which he had bound himself to abandon, and violates all the clauses of the very act which he had been paid to pass.

For more than ten years the people had seen the rights which were theirs by a double claim — by immemorial inheritance and by recent purchase — infringed by the perfidious king who had recognized them. At length circumstances compelled Charles to summon another Parliament.[1] Another chance was given to our fathers; were they to throw it away as they had thrown away the former? Were they again to be cozened by *le Roi le veut?*[2] Were they again to advance their money on pledges which had been forfeited over and over again? Were they to lay a second Petition of Right at the foot of the throne, to grant another lavish aid in exchange for another unmeaning ceremony, and then to take their departure, till, after ten years more of fraud and oppression, their prince should again require a supply, and again repay it with a perjury? They were compelled to choose whether they would trust a tyrant or conquer him. We think that they chose wisely and nobly.

The advocates of Charles, like the advocates of other malefactors against whom overwhelming evi-

[1] The troubles in England and Ireland, and more especially in Scotland, put an end to the period of personal government (1629–1640) and led to the calling of the Long Parliament.

[2] "The King wills it" — the formula of royal consent to an Act of Parliament, dating from Anglo-Norman times. The corresponding negative is no longer used, as the veto power has lapsed.

dence is produced, generally decline all controversy about the facts, and content themselves with calling testimony to character. He had so many private virtues! And had James II. no private virtues? Was Oliver Cromwell, his bitterest enemies themselves being judges, destitute of private virtues? And what, after all, are the virtues ascribed to Charles? A religious zeal, not more sincere than that of his son, and fully as weak and narrow-minded, and a few of the ordinary household decencies which half the tombstones in England claim for those who lie beneath them. A good father! A good husband! Ample apologies indeed for fifteen years of persecution, tyranny, and falsehood!

We charge him with having broken his coronation oath, and we are told that he kept his marriage vow! We accuse him of having given up his people to the merciless inflictions of the most hot-headed and hard-hearted of prelates,[1] and the defense is that he took his little son on his knee and kissed him! We censure him for having violated the articles of the Petition of Right, after having, for good and valuable consideration, promised to observe them; and we are informed that he was accustomed to hear prayers at six o'clock in the morning! It is to such considerations as these, together with his Vandyke[2] dress, his handsome face, and his peaked beard, that he owes, we verily believe, most of his popularity with the present generation.

For ourselves, we own that we do not understand the common phrase, "a good man, but a bad king."

[1] Laud.

[2] Referring to the many pictures made of Charles by the famous Flemish painter, Sir Anthony Van Dyck (1599–1641).

We can as easily conceive a good man and an unnatural father, or a good man and a treacherous friend. We cannot, in estimating the character of an individual, leave out of our consideration his conduct in the most important of all human relations; and if in that relation we find him to have been selfish, cruel, and deceitful, we shall take the liberty to call him a bad man, in spite of all his temperance at table and all his regularity at chapel.[1]

We cannot refrain from adding a few words respecting a topic on which the defenders of Charles are fond of dwelling. If, they say, he governed his people ill, he at least governed them after the example of his predecessors. If he violated their privileges, it was because those privileges had not been accurately defined. No act of oppression has ever been imputed to him which has not a parallel in the annals of the Tudors. This point Hume has labored,[2] with an art which is as discreditable in a historical work as it would be admirable in a forensic address. The answer is short, clear, and decisive. Charles had assented to the Petition of Right. He had renounced the oppressive powers said to have been exercised by his predecessors, and he had renounced them for money. He was not entitled to set up his antiquated claims against his own recent release.

These arguments are so obvious that it may seem superfluous to dwell upon them, but those who have

[1] Macaulay undoubtedly minimizes the amount of allowance to be made for Charles in consideration of his inherited ideas as to the divine origin of his power and of the teachings of his blind and selfish courtiers. He feels that this charge may be made against him, so he meets it in the next paragraph with an argument which simply opens up the same old discussion.

observed how much the events of that time are misrepresented and misunderstood will not blame us for stating the case simply. It is a case of which the simplest statement is the strongest.

The enemies of the Parliament, indeed, rarely choose to take issue on the great points of the question. They content themselves with exposing some of the crimes and follies to which public commotions necessarily give birth. They bewail the unmerited fate of Strafford.[1] They execrate the lawless violence of the army. They laugh at the scriptural names of the preachers. Major-generals fleecing their districts; soldiers reveling on the spoils of a ruined peasantry; upstarts, enriched by the public plunder, taking possession of the hospitable firesides and hereditary trees of the old gentry; boys smashing the beautiful windows of cathedrals; Quakers[2] riding naked through the market-place; Fifth-monarchy men[3] shouting for King Jesus; agitators lecturing from the tops of tubs on the fate of Agag, — all these, they tell us, were the offspring of the Great Rebellion.

Be it so. We are not careful to answer in this matter. These charges, were they infinitely more important, would not alter our opinion of an event which alone has made us to differ from the slaves who crouch beneath despotic sceptres. Many evils, no doubt, were produced by the Civil War. They

[1] Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford (1593–1641), the able but misleading adviser of Charles I., who was executed under act of attainder. Browning has written a tragedy about him.

[2] George Fox began his work shortly before Charles's execution, but the sect was not organized till after the Restoration.

[3] They believed that they must bring about by force the immediate kingdom of Christ, which would thus succeed the rule of Assyria, Persia, Greece, and Rome.

were the price of our liberty. Has the acquisition been worth the sacrifice? It is the nature of the devil of tyranny to tear and rend the body which he leaves.[1] Are the miseries of continued possession less horrible than the struggles of the tremendous exorcism?

If it were possible that a people brought up under an intolerant and arbitrary system could subvert that system without acts of cruelty and folly, half the objections to despotic power would be removed. We should, in that case, be compelled to acknowledge that it at least produces no pernicious effects on the intellectual and moral character of a nation. We deplore the outrages which accompany revolutions. But the more violent the outrages, the more assured we feel that a revolution was necessary. The violence of those outrages will always be proportioned to the ferocity and ignorance of the people, and the ferocity and ignorance of the people will be proportioned to the oppression and degradation under which they have been accustomed to live. Thus it was in our Civil War. The heads of the Church and State reaped only that which they had sown. The government had prohibited free discussion; it had done its best to keep the people unacquainted with their duties and their rights. The retribution was just and natural. If our rulers suffered from popular ignorance, it was because they had themselves taken away the key of knowledge. If they were assailed with blind fury, it was because they had exacted an equally blind submission.

It is the character of such revolutions that we always see the worst of them at first. Till men have

[1] Macaulay in his *Conversation* between Milton and Cowley has this very same Biblical figure.

been some time free, they know not how to use their freedom. The natives of wine countries are generally sober. In climates where wine is a rarity intemperance abounds. A newly liberated people may be compared to a northern army encamped on the Rhine or the Xeres.[1] It is said that, when soldiers in such a situation first find themselves able to indulge without restraint in such a rare and expensive luxury, nothing is to be seen but intoxication. Soon, however, plenty teaches discretion, and, after wine has been for a few months their daily fare, they become more temperate than they had ever been in their own country. In the same manner, the final and permanent fruits of liberty are wisdom, moderation, and mercy. Its immediate effects are often atrocious crimes, conflicting errors, skepticism on points the most clear, dogmatism on points the most mysterious.[2] It is just at this crisis that its enemies love to exhibit it. They pull down the scaffolding from the half-finished edifice; they point to the flying dust, the falling bricks, the comfortless rooms, the frightful irregularity of the whole appearance, and then ask in scorn where the promised splendor and comfort is to be found. If such miserable sophisms were to prevail, there would never be a good house or a good government in the world.

Ariosto tells a pretty story[3] of a fairy, who, by some mysterious law of her nature, was condemned to appear at certain seasons in the form of a foul and poisonous snake. Those who injured her during the

[1] Xeres. Not a river, but the Spanish town Jerez de la Frontera, near Cadiz. Sherry gets its name from the place.

[2] Notice the balancing.

[3] *Orlando Furioso*, xliii. 72.

period of her disguise were forever excluded from participation in the blessings which she bestowed. But to those who, in spite of her loathsome aspect, pitied and protected her, she afterwards revealed herself in the beautiful and celestial form which was natural to her; accompanied their steps, granted all their wishes, filled their houses with wealth, made them happy in love and victorious in war. Such a spirit is Liberty. At times she takes the form of a hateful reptile. She grovels, she hisses, she stings. But woe to those who in disgust shall venture to crush her! And happy are those who, having dared to receive her in her degraded and frightful shape, shall at length be rewarded by her in the time of her beauty and her glory!

There is only one cure for the evils which newly acquired freedom produces, and that cure is freedom. When a prisoner first leaves his cell he cannot bear the light of day; he is unable to discriminate colors or recognize faces. But the remedy is, not to remand him into his dungeon, but to accustom him to the rays of the sun. The blaze of truth and liberty may at first dazzle and bewilder nations which have become half blind in the house of bondage. But let them gaze on, and they will soon be able to bear it. In a few years men learn to reason. The extreme violence of opinions subsides. Hostile theories correct each other. The scattered elements of truth cease to contend, and begin to coalesce. And at length a system of justice and order is educed out of the chaos.

Many politicians of our time are in the habit of laying it down as a self-evident proposition that no people ought to be free till they are fit to use their

freedom. The maxim is worthy of the fool in the old story, who resolved not to go into the water till he had learned to swim. If men are to wait for liberty till they become wise and good in slavery, they may indeed wait forever.

Therefore it is that we decidedly approve of the conduct of Milton and the other wise and good men who, in spite of much that was ridiculous and hateful in the conduct of their associates, stood firmly by the cause of public liberty. We are not aware that the poet has been charged with personal participation in any of the blamable excesses of that time. The favorite topic of his enemies is the line of conduct which he pursued with regard to the execution of the king. Of that celebrated proceeding we by no means approve. Still we must say, in justice to the many eminent persons who concurred in it, and in justice more particularly to the eminent person who defended it, that nothing can be more absurd than the imputations which, for the last hundred and sixty years, it has been the fashion to cast upon the Regicides.[1] We have, throughout, abstained from appealing to first principles. We will not appeal to them now. We recur again to the parallel case of the Revolution. What essential distinction can be drawn between the execution of the father and the deposition of the son? What constitutional maxim is there which applies to the former and not to the latter?

[1] Members of the High Court of Justice nominated by the "Rump" Parliament to try Charles I. There were one hundred and fifty members, of whom only sixty-seven were present at the trial. Several of these were afterwards executed. Three of them hid themselves in America. See Hawthorne's tale, *The Gray Champion.*

The king can do no wrong.[1] If so, James was as innocent as Charles could have been. The minister, only, ought to be responsible for the acts of the sovereign. If so, why not impeach Jeffreys[2] and retain James? The person of a king is sacred. Was the person of James considered sacred at the Boyne?[3] To discharge cannon against an army in which a king is known to be posted is to approach pretty near to regicide. Charles, too, it should always be remembered, was put to death by men who had been exasperated by the hostilities of several years, and who had never been bound to him by any other tie than that which was common to them with all their fellow-citizens. Those who drove James from his throne, who seduced his army, who alienated his friends, who first imprisoned him in his palace and then turned him out of it, who broke in upon his very slumbers by imperious messages, who pursued him with fire and sword from one part of the empire to another, who hanged, drew, and quartered his adherents, and attainted his innocent heir,[4] were his nephew and his

[1] The theory of English law which holds ministers responsible for the sovereign's acts.

[2] George Jeffreys (1648–1689), the notorious Chief Justice, Lord Chancellor, and adviser of James II., who after Monmouth's rebellion held the celebrated "Bloody Assizes" (1685) and earned a reputation for brutality and cruelty second to none.

[3] The Boyne is a river in the north of Ireland where a decisive victory was won on July 1, 1690, by William over James. James does not appear to have risked his own person overmuch. The anniversary of the battle is still observed by the Orangemen. See Macaulay's *History*, chapter xvi.

[4] James Fr[illegible] [illegible]–1766), son of James II. and [illegible] unjustly suspected, a[illegible] afterwards known

two daughters.[1] When we reflect on all these things, we are at a loss to conceive how the same persons who, on the 5th of November,[2] thank God for wonderfully conducting his servant William, and for making all opposition fall before him until he became our king and governor, can, on the 30th of January,[3] contrive to be afraid that the blood of the Royal Martyr may be visited on themselves and their children.

We disapprove, we repeat, of the execution of Charles; not because the constitution exempts the king from responsibility, for we know that all such maxims, however excellent, have their exceptions; nor because we feel any peculiar interest in his character, for we think that his sentence describes him with perfect justice as "a tyrant, a traitor, a murderer, and a public enemy;" but because we are convinced that the measure was most injurious to the cause of freedom. He whom it removed was a captive and a hostage; his heir, to whom the allegiance of every Royalist was instantly transferred, was at large. The Presbyterians could never have been perfectly reconciled to the father; they had no such rooted enmity to the son. The great body of the people, also, contemplated that proceeding with feel-

as the Old Pretender (to distinguish him from his son, Charles Edward) and instigated the rising of 1715.

[1] William of Orange was the son of James's sister Mary and married his daughter Mary. James's other daughter, Anne, afterwards queen, took William's part.

[2] The anniversary of both the Gunpowder Plot and William's landing in England, marked in the English Prayer Book by a special "Form of Prayer and Thanksgiving," which was taken out, along with the service in memory of Charles I., in 1859.

[3] The anniversary of Charles I.'s execution.

ings which, however unreasonable, no government could safely venture to outrage.[1]

But though we think the conduct of the Regicides blamable, that of Milton appears to us in a very different light. The deed was done. It could not be undone. The evil was incurred, and the object was to render it as small as possible. We censure the chiefs of the army for not yielding to the popular opinion, but we cannot censure Milton for wishing to change that opinion. The very feeling which would have restrained us from committing the act would have led us, after it had been committed, to defend it against the ravings of servility and superstition. For the sake of public liberty, we wish that the thing had not been done while the people disapproved of it. But, for the sake of public liberty, we should also have wished the people to approve of it when it was done. If anything more were wanting to the justification of Milton, the book of Salmasius[2] would furnish it. That miserable performance is now with justice considered only as a beacon to word-catchers who wish to become statesmen. The celebrity of the man who refuted it, the "Æneæ magni dextra,"[3] gives it all its fame with the present gener-

[1] Macaulay put substantially these reasons in Milton's mouth in the *Conversation* with Cowley.

[2] The Latinized name of the French scholar Claude Saumaise (1588–1653), then professor at Leyden. He had been lucky enough to discover the Palatine MS. of the Anthology (see page 44, note 3) and had won a great reputation for his erudition. He was therefore commissioned to write a *Defense of Charles I.*, which was a failure and is known only to antiquaries to-day for the reasons Macaulay assigns. See page 8, note 1.

[3] Virgil, *Æneid*, x. 830, "Æneæ magni dextra cadis" — "thou fallest by the right hand of the great Æneas" — is a proverbial

ation. In that age the state of things was different. It was not then fully understood how vast an interval separates the mere classical scholar from the political philosopher. Nor can it be doubted that a treatise which, bearing the name of so eminent a critic, attacked the fundamental principles of all free governments, must, if suffered to remain unanswered, have produced a most pernicious effect on the public mind.

We wish to add a few words relative to another subject, on which the enemies of Milton delight to dwell, — his conduct during the administration of the Protector. That an enthusiastic votary of liberty should accept office under a military usurper seems, no doubt, at first sight, extraordinary. But all the circumstances in which the country was then placed were extraordinary. The ambition of Oliver was of no vulgar kind. He never seems to have coveted despotic power. He at first fought sincerely and manfully for the Parliament, and never deserted it till it had deserted its duty. If he dissolved it by force, it was not till he found that the few members who remained after so many deaths, secessions, and expulsions were desirous to appropriate to themselves a power which they held only in trust, and to inflict upon England the curse of a Venetian oligarchy.[1] But, even when thus placed by violence at the head of affairs, he did not assume unlimited power. He gave the country a constitution far more perfect than any which had at that time been known in the world.[2]

expression describing the fate suffered by an unknown person at the hands of a famous one.

[1] Venice gradually fell into the hands of a small number of men, who governed more or less despotically.

[2] The Instrument of Government (1653), which provided for

He reformed the representative system in a manner which has extorted praise even from Lord Clarendon. For himself he demanded, indeed, the first place in the Commonwealth, but with powers scarcely so great as those of a Dutch stadtholder[1] or an American president. He gave the Parliament a voice in the appointment of ministers, and left to it the whole legislative authority, not even reserving to himself a veto on its enactments; and he did not require that the chief magistracy should be hereditary in his family. Thus far, we think, if the circumstances of the time and the opportunities which he had of aggrandizing himself be fairly considered, he will not lose by comparison with Washington or Bolivar.[2] Had his moderation been met by corresponding moderation, there is no reason to think that he would have overstepped the line which he had traced for himself. But when he found that his Parliaments questioned the authority under which they met, and that he was in danger of being deprived of the restricted power which was absolutely necessary to his personal safety, then it must be acknowledged he adopted a more arbitrary policy.

Yet, though we believe that the intentions of Cromwell were at first honest, though we believe that he was driven from the noble course which he had marked out for himself by the almost irresistible

the annual meeting of a parliament, representing England, Scotland, and Ireland, did away with rotten boroughs and widened the franchise.

[1] That is, governor of a province, a title which came to mean the chief executive of the United Provinces.

[2] Simon Bolivar (1783–1830), the "Liberator," was the leader in the revolt of the South American colonies against Spain.

force of circumstances, though we admire, in common with all men of all parties, the ability and energy of his splendid administration, we are not pleading for arbitrary and lawless power, even in his hands. We know that a good constitution is infinitely better than the best despot. But we suspect that, at the time of which we speak, the violence of religious and political enmities rendered a stable and happy settlement next to impossible. The choice lay, not between Cromwell and liberty, but between Cromwell and the Stuarts. That Milton chose well no man can doubt who fairly compares the events of the Protectorate with those of the thirty years which succeeded it, the darkest and most disgraceful in the English annals. Cromwell was evidently laying, though in an irregular manner, the foundations of an admirable system. Never before had religious liberty and the freedom of discussion been enjoyed in a greater degree. Never had the national honor been better upheld abroad, or the seat of justice better filled at home. And it was rarely that any opposition which stopped short of open rebellion provoked the resentment of the liberal and magnanimous usurper. The institutions which he had established, as set down in the Instrument of Government and the Humble Petition and Advice,[1] were excellent. His practice, it is true, too often departed from the theory of these institutions. But had he lived a few years longer, it is probable that his institutions would have survived him, and that his arbitrary practice would have died with him. His

[1] The petition that Cromwell accept the title of king, and govern with the advice of two Houses of Parliament. This was accepted in May, 1657, with the rejection, however, of the title of king.

power had not been consecrated by ancient prejudices. It was upheld only by his great personal qualities. Little, therefore, was to be dreaded from a second Protector, unless he were also a second Oliver Cromwell. The events which followed his decease are the most complete vindication of those who exerted themselves to uphold his authority. His death dissolved the whole frame of society. The army rose against the Parliament, the different corps of the army against each other. Sect raved against sect. Party plotted against party. The Presbyterians, in their eagerness to be revenged on the Independents,[1] sacrificed their own liberty, and deserted all their old principles. Without casting one glance on the past, or requiring one stipulation for the future, they threw down their freedom at the feet of the most frivolous and heartless of tyrants.

Then came those days, never to be recalled without a blush, the days of servitude without loyalty and sensuality without love; of dwarfish talents and gigantic vices; the paradise of cold hearts and narrow minds; the golden age of the coward, the bigot, and the slave. The king cringed to his rival[2] that he might trample on his people; sank into a viceroy of France, and pocketed with complacent infamy her degrading insults and her more degrading gold.[3] The caresses of harlots and the jests of buffoons regulated the policy of the state. The government had just ability enough to deceive, and just religion

[1] Those who, unlike the Presbyterians and Churchmen, desired no general church government. Milton sided with them.

[2] Louis XIV., of France.

[3] See Green, and especially the details as to the secret Treaty of Dover (1670).

enough to persecute. The principles of liberty were the scoff of every grinning courtier, and the Anathema Maranatha[1] of every fawning dean. In every high place, worship was paid to Charles and James, Belial and Moloch;[2] and England propitiated those obscene and cruel idols with the blood of her best and bravest children. Crime succeeded to crime, and disgrace to disgrace, till the race, accursed of God and man, was a second time driven forth to wander on the face of the earth, and to be a byword and a shaking of the head to the nations.

Most of the remarks which we have hitherto made on the public character of Milton apply to him only as one of a large body. We shall proceed to notice some of the peculiarities which distinguished him from his contemporaries. And for that purpose it is necessary to take a short survey of the parties into which the political world was at that time divided. We must premise that our observations are intended to apply only to those who adhered, from a sincere preference, to one or to the other side. In days of public commotion every faction, like an Oriental army, is attended by a crowd of camp-followers, a useless and heartless rabble, who prowl round its line of march in the hope of picking up something under its protection, but desert it in the day of battle, and often join to exterminate it after a defeat. England, at the time of which we are treating, abounded

[1] 1 Corinthians xvi. 22. The phrase is partly Greek, partly Syriac, and in the revised version is properly separated by a period. *Anathema* is, Let him be accursed. The apostle then turns to the believers, and says to them, *Maran atha, i. e.*, Our Lord cometh.

[2] See Milton's description of these fiends in *Paradise Lost*, ii. 43–225.

with fickle and selfish politicians, who transferred their support to every government as it rose; who kissed the hand of the king in 1640, and spat in his face in 1649; who shouted with equal glee when Cromwell was inaugurated in Westminster Hall, and when he was dug up to be hanged at Tyburn; who dined on calves' heads or on broiled rumps, and cut down oak branches or stuck them up, as circumstances altered, without the slightest shame or repugnance.[1] These we leave out of the account. We take our estimate of parties from those who really deserve to be called partisans.

We would speak first of the Puritans, the most remarkable body of men, perhaps, which the world has ever produced. The odious and ridiculous parts of their character lie on the surface. He that runs may read them; nor have there been wanting attentive and malicious observers to point them out. For many years after the Restoration they were the theme of unmeasured invective and derision. They were exposed to the utmost licentiousness of the press and of the stage, at the time when the press and the stage were most licentious. They were not men of letters; they were, as a body, unpopular; they could not defend themselves; and the public would not take them under its protection. They were therefore abandoned, without reserve, to the tender mercies of the satirists

[1] The references are (1) to the assembling of the Long Parliament; (2) to the beheading of the king; (3) to the inauguration of the Protector in 1653; (4) to the treatment of his body after the Restoration (Tyburn being the place of execution of common malefactors); (5) to popular demonstrations of the rebels and the king's men, the latter of whom, of course, despised the Rump Parliament and rejoiced at Prince Charles' escape after Worcester by hiding in the historic oak.

and dramatists. The ostentatious simplicity of their dress, their sour aspect, their nasal twang, their stiff posture, their long graces, their Hebrew names, the scriptural phrases which they introduced on every occasion, their contempt of human learning, their detestation of polite amusements, were indeed fair game for the laughers. But it is not from the laughers alone that the philosophy of history is to be learned. And he who approaches this subject should carefully guard against the influence of that potent ridicule which has already misled so many excellent writers.

> "Ecco il fonte del riso, ed ecco il rio
> Che mortali perigli in se contiene:
> Hor qui tener a fren nostro desio,
> Ed esser cauti molto a noi conviene." [1]

Those who roused the people to resistance; who directed their measures through a long series of eventful years; who formed, out of the most unpromising materials, the finest army that Europe had ever seen; who trampled down king, church, and aristocracy; who, in the short intervals of domestic sedition and rebellion, made the name of England terrible to every nation on the face of the earth, — were no vulgar fanatics. Most of their absurdities were mere external badges, like the signs of freemasonry or the dresses of friars.[2] We regret that these badges were

[1] "'See here the fount of laughter! see the stream
To which such fatal qualities belong!'
'Now,' they exclaim'd, 'let us avoid the dream
Of warm desire, and in resolve be strong.'"
Tasso, *Jerusalem Delivered*, xv. 57, Fairfax's translation.

[2] Friars is the general title of the four mendicant orders of monks: the Franciscans, the Dominicans, the Carmelites, and the Augustinians. They were at the height of their influence in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

not more attractive. We regret that a body to whose courage and talents mankind has owed inestimable obligations, had not the lofty elegance which distinguished some of the adherents of Charles I., or the easy good-breeding for which the court of Charles II. was celebrated. But, if we must make our choice, we shall, like Bassanio[1] in the play, turn from the specious caskets which contain only the death's-head and the fool's-head, and fix on the plain leaden chest which conceals the treasure.

The Puritans were men whose minds had derived a peculiar character from the daily contemplation of superior beings and eternal interests. Not content with acknowledging in general terms an overruling Providence, they habitually ascribed every event to the will of the Great Being, for whose power nothing was too vast, for whose inspection nothing was too minute. To know Him, to serve Him, to enjoy Him, was with them the great end of existence. They rejected with contempt the ceremonious homage which other sects substituted for the pure worship of the soul. Instead of catching occasional glimpses of the Deity through an obscuring veil, they aspired to gaze full on the intolerable brightness, and to commune with Him face to face. Hence originated their contempt for terrestrial distinctions. The difference between the greatest and the meanest of mankind seemed to vanish when compared with the boundless interval which separated the whole race from Him on whom their own eyes were constantly fixed. They recognized no title to superiority but His favor; and, confident of that favor, they despised all the accomplishments and all the dignities of the world. If they

[1] See *Merchant of Venice*, III. ii.

were unacquainted with the works of philosophers and poets, they were deeply read in the oracles of God. If their names were not found in the registers of heralds, they were recorded in the Book of Life. If their steps were not accompanied by a splendid train of menials, legions of ministering angels had charge over them. Their palaces were houses not made with hands; their diadems, crowns of glory which should never fade away. On the rich and the eloquent, on nobles and priests, they looked down with contempt; for they esteemed themselves rich in a more precious treasure, and eloquent in a more sublime language, nobles by the right of an earlier creation, and priests by the imposition of a mightier hand.[1] The very meanest of them was a being to whose fate a mysterious and terrible importance belonged, on whose slightest action the spirits of light and darkness looked with anxious interest; who had been destined, before heaven and earth were created, to enjoy a felicity which should continue when heaven and earth should have passed away. Events which short-sighted politicians ascribed to earthly causes had been ordained on his account. For his sake empires had risen, and flourished, and decayed. For his sake the Almighty had proclaimed His will by the pen of the Evangelist and the harp of the prophet. He had been wrested by no common deliverer from the grasp of no common foe. He had been ransomed by the sweat of no vulgar agony, by the blood of no earthly sacrifice. It was for him that the sun had been darkened, that the rocks had been rent, that the dead had

[1] "Creation" is the technical term for the making of a peer. Priests are, of course, ordained by the "imposition" of the bishop's hands.

risen, that all nature had shuddered at the sufferings of her expiring God.

Thus the Puritan was made up of two different men: the one all self-abasement, penitence, gratitude, passion; the other proud, calm, inflexible, sagacious. He prostrated himself in the dust before his Maker, but he set his foot on the neck of his king. In his devotional retirement, he prayed with convulsions, and groans, and tears. He was half maddened by glorious or terrible illusions. He heard the lyres of angels or the tempting whispers of fiends. He caught a gleam of the Beatific Vision,[1] or woke screaming from dreams of everlasting fire. Like Vane,[2] he thought himself intrusted with the sceptre of the millennial year. Like Fleetwood,[3] he cried in the bitterness of his soul that God had hid His face from him. But when he took his seat in the council, or girt on his sword for war, these tempestuous workings of the soul had left no perceptible trace behind them. People who saw nothing of the godly but their uncouth visages, and heard nothing from them but their

[1] The Beatific Vision in mediæval theology meant the direct sight of God himself, which constituted the essential happiness of the saints in heaven. See Dante's *Paradiso*, xxxiii.

[2] Sir Harry Vane the younger (1612–1662), Puritan, mystic, and intense republican, was Governor of Massachusetts Bay, where he got into trouble (1636–37). Then he took sides against the king, then against Cromwell, and was finally executed as a regicide. He believed in the speedy coming of the millennium, or thousand years of Christ's acknowledged supremacy over the nations. Milton addressed his seventeenth sonnet to him, — a magnificent tribute somewhat undeserved.

[3] Charles Fleetwood (born 1620?, died shortly after 1690) was a major-general in the army and Cromwell's son-in-law. He tried to supplant Richard Cromwell, but had not the necessary strength of character.

groans and their whining hymns, might laugh at them. But those had little reason to laugh who encountered them in the hall of debate or in the field of battle. These fanatics brought to civil and military affairs a coolness of judgment and an immutability of purpose which some writers have thought inconsistent with their religious zeal, but which were in fact the necessary effects of it. The intensity of their feelings on one subject made them tranquil on every other. One overpowering sentiment had subjected to itself pity and hatred, ambition and fear. Death had lost its terrors and pleasure its charms. They had their smiles and their tears, their raptures and their sorrows, but not for the things of this world. Enthusiasm had made them Stoics, had cleared their minds from every vulgar passion and prejudice, and raised them above the influence of danger and of corruption. It sometimes might lead them to pursue unwise ends, but never to choose unwise means. They went through the world, like Sir Artegal's iron man Talus[1] with his flail, crushing and trampling down oppressors, mingling with human beings, but having neither part nor lot in human infirmities; insensible to fatigue, to pleasure, and to pain; not to be pierced by any weapon, not to be withstood by any barrier.

Such we believe to have been the character of the Puritans. We perceive the absurdity of their manners. We dislike the sullen gloom of their domestic habits. We acknowledge that the tone of their minds was often injured by straining after things too high for mortal reach; and we know that, in spite of their hatred of Popery, they too often fell into the worst vices of that bad system, — intolerance and extrava-

[1] See the *Faerie Queene*, v. Artegal represents Justice.

gant austerity; that they had their anchorites and their crusades, their Dunstans[1] and their De Montforts,[2] their Dominics[3] and their Escobars.[4] Yet, when all circumstances are taken into consideration, we do not hesitate to pronounce them a brave, a wise, an honest, and a useful body.

The Puritans espoused the cause of civil liberty mainly because it was the cause of religion. There was another party, by no means numerous, but distinguished by learning and ability, which acted with them on very different principles. We speak of those whom Cromwell was accustomed to call the Heathens, men who were, in the phraseology of that time, doubting Thomases or careless Gallios[5] with regard to religious subjects, but passionate worshipers of freedom. Heated by the study of ancient literature, they set up their country as their idol, and proposed to themselves the heroes of Plutarch as their examples. They seem to have borne some resemblance to the Brissotines[6] of the French Revolution.

[1] The great Anglo-Saxon Archbishop of Canterbury, who regulated the clergy under Edgar (*circa* 959).

[2] Simon de Montfort (died 1218), father of the greater English statesman of the same name, was notorious for his cruelty in Innocent III.'s crusade against the Albigenses in Provence (1208).

[3] St. Dominic (1170–1221) was a Spanish monk, associated with de Montfort in his cruelties, and founder of the Dominican Friars, who were great heretic hunters as well as learned preachers. See page 71, note 2.

[4] Antonio Escobar (1589–1669), a noted Spanish Jesuit, who wrote casuistical treatises on morals to the amount of forty folio volumes. He held that the end might justify the means, and was criticised for this by Pascal.

[5] See Acts xviii. 17.

[6] The moderate republicans in the French Revolution, better known as Girondists.

But it is not very easy to draw the line of distinction between them and their devout associates, whose tone and manner they sometimes found it convenient to affect, and sometimes, it is probable, imperceptibly adopted.

We now come to the Royalists. We shall attempt to speak of them, as we have spoken of their antagonists, with perfect candor. We shall not charge upon a whole party the profligacy and baseness of the horse boys, gamblers, and bravoes, whom the hope of license and plunder attracted from all the dens of Whitefriars[1] to the standard of Charles, and who disgraced their associates by excesses which, under the stricter discipline of the parliamentary armies, were never tolerated. We will select a more favorable specimen. Thinking as we do that the cause of the king was the cause of bigotry and tyranny, we yet cannot refrain from looking with complacency on the character of the honest old Cavaliers. We feel a national pride in comparing them with the instruments which the despots of other countries are compelled to employ, — with the mutes who throng their ante-chambers, and the Janissaries[2] who mount guard at their gates. Our Royalist countrymen were not heartless, dangling courtiers, bowing at every step, and simpering at every word. They were not mere machines for destruction, dressed up in uniforms,

[1] A district in London, which, on account of old privileges preventing the arrest of its inhabitants, was long the home of ruffians and idlers.

[2] A famous body of infantry, serving as the Sultan's guard and the main part of the standing army, largely composed of conscripts taken from the Christian subjects of Turkey. Becoming dangerous, they were exterminated in 1826, having been in existence since the fourteenth century.

caned into skill, intoxicated into valor, defending without love, destroying without hatred. There was a freedom in their subserviency, a nobleness in their very degradation. The sentiment of individual independence was strong within them. They were indeed misled, but by no base or selfish motive. Compassion and romantic honor, the prejudices of childhood and the venerable names of history, threw over them a spell potent as that of Duessa; and, like the Red Cross Knight,[1] they thought that they were doing battle for an injured beauty while they defended a false and loathsome sorceress. In truth, they scarcely entered at all into the merits of the political question. It was not for a treacherous king or an intolerant church that they fought, but for the old banner which had waved in so many battles over the heads of their fathers, and for the altars at which they had received the hands of their brides. Though nothing could be more erroneous than their political opinions, they possessed, in a far greater degree than their adversaries, those qualities which are the grace of private life. With many of the vices of the Round Table,[2] they had also many of its virtues, — courtesy, generosity, veracity, tenderness, and respect for women. They had far more both of profound and of polite learning than the Puritans. Their manners were more engaging, their tempers more amiable, their tastes more elegant, and their households more cheerful.

Milton did not strictly belong to any of the classes

[1] See *The Faerie Queene*, i.

[2] Tennyson's *Last Tournament*, though not one of the best of the *Idylls*, describes the vices that undermined King Arthur's noble institution.

which we have described. He was not a Puritan. He was not a freethinker. He was not a Royalist. In his character the noblest qualities of every party were combined in harmonious union. From the Parliament and from the court, from the conventicle and from the Gothic cloister, from the gloomy and sepulchral circles of the Roundheads, and from the Christmas revel of the hospitable Cavalier, his nature selected and drew to itself whatever was great and good, while it rejected all the base and pernicious ingredients by which those finer elements were defiled. Like the Puritans, he lived

"As ever in his great Taskmaster's eye." [1]

Like them, he kept his mind continually fixed on an Almighty Judge and an eternal reward. And hence he acquired their contempt of external circumstances, their fortitude, their tranquillity, their inflexible resolution. But not the coolest skeptic or the most profane scoffer was more perfectly free from the contagion of their frantic delusions, their savage manners, their ludicrous jargon,[2] their scorn of science, and their aversion to pleasure. Hating tyranny with a perfect hatred, he had nevertheless all the estimable and ornamental qualities which were almost entirely monopolized by the party of the tyrant. There was none who had a stronger sense of the value of literature, a finer relish for every elegant amusement, or a more chivalrous delicacy of honor and love. Though his opinions were democratic, his tastes and his associations were such as harmonize best with monarchy and aristocracy. He was under the influence of all

[1] From Milton's fine seventh sonnet, written "on his having arrived at the age of twenty-three."

[2] That is, their peculiar application of scriptural language.

the feelings by which the gallant Cavaliers were misled. But of those feelings he was the master and not the slave. Like the hero[1] of Homer, he enjoyed all the pleasures of fascination; but he was not fascinated. He listened to the song of the Sirens, yet he glided by without being seduced to their fatal shore. He tasted the cup of Circe, but he bore about him a sure antidote against the effects of its bewitching sweetness. The illusions which captivated his imagination never impaired his reasoning powers. The statesman was proof against the splendor, the solemnity, and the romance which enchanted the poet. Any person who will contrast the sentiments expressed in his treatises on Prelacy[2] with the exquisite lines on ecclesiastical architecture and music in the "Penseroso,"[3] which was published about the same time, will understand our meaning. This is an inconsistency which, more than anything else, raises his character in our estimation, because it shows how many private tastes and feelings he sacrificed in order to do what he considered his duty to mankind. It is the very struggle of the noble Othello.[4] His heart relents, but his hand is firm. He does naught in hate, but all in honor. He kisses the beautiful deceiver before he destroys her.

[1] Ulysses. See *Odyssey*, x. and xii.

[2] That is, the prose pamphlets, *Of Reformation touching Church Discipline in England, Of Prelatical Episcopacy, The Reason of Church Government urg'd against Prelaty*, etc., all dating from 1641.

[3] The lines are 155–166. *Il Penseroso* was first published in the 1645 edition of Milton's collected *Minor Poems*. It had been written from twelve to fourteen years earlier.

[4] See Act V., scene ii., of the play which Macaulay, writing the year before of Dante, had declared to be "perhaps the greatest work in the world."

That from which the public character of Milton derives its great and peculiar splendor still remains to be mentioned. If he exerted himself to overthrow a forsworn king and a persecuting hierarchy, he exerted himself in conjunction with others. But the glory of the battle which he fought for the species of freedom which is the most valuable, and which was then the least understood, the freedom of the human mind, is all his own. Thousands and tens of thousands among his contemporaries raised their voices against ship money and the Star Chamber. But there were few indeed who discerned the more fearful evils of moral and intellectual slavery, and the benefits which would result from the liberty of the press[1] and the unfettered exercise of private judgment.[2] These were the objects which Milton justly conceived to be the most important. He was desirous that the people should think for themselves as well as tax themselves, and should be emancipated from the dominion of prejudice as well as from that of Charles. He knew that those who, with the best intentions, overlooked these schemes of reform, and contented themselves with pulling down the king and imprisoning the malignants,[3] acted like the heedless brothers in his own poem,[4] who, in their eagerness to disperse

[1] It was in defense of the liberty of the press that Milton published, in 1644, his *Areopagitica*, probably the finest and certainly the most often read of his prose works.

[2] Most of the early prose tracts would seem to fall under this head.

[3] That is, virulently harmful (to the cause of liberty), — a term much applied by the Parliament men to the king's supporters.

[4] *Comus.* The lines below are 815–819. At the beginning of the next paragraph Macaulay, by paraphrasing, explains the quotation.

the train of the sorcerer, neglected the means of liberating the captive. They thought only of conquering when they should have thought of disenchanting.

> "Oh, ye mistook, ye should have snatch'd his wand,
> And bound him fast; without his rod revers'd,
> And backward mutters of dissevering power,
> We cannot free the Lady that sits here
> In stony fetters fix'd, and motionless."

To reverse the rod, to spell the charm backward, to break the ties which bound a stupefied people to the seat of enchantment, was the noble aim of Milton. To this all his public conduct was directed. For this he joined the Presbyterians; for this he forsook them. He fought their perilous battle, but he turned away with disdain from their insolent triumph. He saw that they, like those whom they had vanquished, were hostile to the liberty of thought. He therefore joined the Independents, and called upon Cromwell to break the secular chain, and to save free conscience from the paw of the Presbyterian wolf.[1] With a view to the same great object, he attacked the licensing system,[2] in that sublime treatise which every statesman should wear as a sign upon his hand and as frontlets between his eyes. His attacks were, in general, directed less against particular abuses than against those deeply seated errors on which almost all abuses are founded, — the servile worship of eminent men and the irrational dread of innovation.

[1] "Secular chain" (see Sonnet xvi.) refers to the alliance between church and state. In *Lycidas* (l. 128), "the grim wolf with privy paw" was probably the Church of Rome; but this was written in 1637, when Laud's leaning toward Rome terrified the poet. Later, it was the narrow policy of the Presbyterians that alarmed him.

[2] That is, as applied to publications. See the *Areopagitica*.

That he might shake the foundations of these debasing sentiments more effectually, he always selected for himself the boldest literary services. He never came up in the rear when the outworks had been carried and the breach entered. He pressed into the forlorn hope. At the beginning of the changes, he wrote with incomparable energy and eloquence against the bishops. But, when his opinion seemed likely to prevail, he passed on to other subjects, and abandoned prelacy to the crowd of writers who now hastened to insult a falling party. There is no more hazardous enterprise than that of bearing the torch of truth into those dark and infected recesses in which no light has ever shone. But it was the choice and the pleasure of Milton to penetrate the noisome vapors, and to brave the terrible explosion. Those who most disapprove of his opinions must respect the hardihood with which he maintained them. He, in general, left to others the credit of expounding and defending the popular parts of his religious and political creed. He took his own stand upon those which the great body of his countrymen reprobated as criminal, or derided as paradoxical. He stood up for divorce and regicide.[1] He attacked the prevailing systems of education.[2] His radiant and beneficent career resembled that of the god of light and fertility: —

> "Nitor in adversum ; nec me, qui cætera, vincit
> Impetus, et rapido contrarius evehor orbi." [3]

[1] *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (1643), and other tracts; *Eikonoklastes* (1649), the *Defensio contra Salmasium*, etc.

[2] *Of Education. To Master S. Hartlib* (1644).

[3] From Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, ii. 72, 73: "I contend against opposition ; nor does that force which conquers all else subdue me, and I ride on in a contrary way to the rapid heavens." The reference is, of course, to the sun.

It is to be regretted that the prose writings of Milton should in our time be so little read. As compositions, they deserve the attention of every man who wishes to become acquainted with the full power of the English language. They abound with passages compared with which the finest declamations of Burke[1] sink into insignificance. They are a perfect field of cloth of gold.[2] The style is stiff with gorgeous embroidery. Not even in the earlier books of the "Paradise Lost" has the great poet ever risen higher than in those parts of his controversial works in which his feelings, excited by conflict, find a vent in bursts of devotional and lyric rapture. It is, to borrow his own majestic language, "a sevenfold chorus of hallelujahs and harping symphonies."

We had intended to look more closely at these performances, to analyze the peculiarities of the diction, to dwell at some length on the sublime wisdom of the "Areopagitica" and the nervous rhetoric of the "Iconoclast," and to point out some of those magnificent passages which occur in the treatise "Of Reformation"[3] and the "Animadversions on the Remon-

[1] The great philosophic statesman Edmund Burke (1729–1797), noted for the splendor of his style. The student may compare the superb passage from the opening of the Second Book of *The Reason of Church Government* (from which Macaulay quotes at the close of the paragraph) with Burke's tribute to Marie Antoinette at the beginning of his *Reflections on the French Revolution.*

[2] This refers to the great meeting between Henry VIII. and Francis I. in 1520, on the plain of Ardres.

[3] Published in 1641. A reply to Bishop Hall, who had attacked a famous Presbyterian tract known by the curious name of *Smectymnuus*, — formed from the initials of its authors.

strant." But the length to which our remarks have already extended renders this impossible.

We must conclude. And yet we can scarcely tear ourselves away from the subject. The days immediately following the publication of this relic of Milton appear to be peculiarly set apart and consecrated to his memory. And we shall scarcely be censured if, on this his festival, we be found lingering near his shrine, how worthless soever may be the offering which we bring to it. While this book lies on our table, we seem to be contemporaries of the writer. We are transported a hundred and fifty years back. We can almost fancy that we are visiting him in his small lodging; that we see him sitting at the old organ beneath the faded green hangings; that we can catch the quick twinkle of his eyes, rolling in vain to find the day; that we are reading in the lines of his noble countenance the proud and mournful history of his glory and his affliction.[1] We image to ourselves the breathless silence in which we should listen to his slightest word; the passionate veneration with which we should kneel to kiss his hand and weep upon it; the earnestness with which we should endeavor to console him, if indeed such a spirit could need consolation, for the neglect of an age unworthy of his talents and his virtues; the eagerness with which we should contest with his daughters, or with his Quaker friend Ellwood,[2] the privilege of reading Homer to

[1] These details are taken from the notes of the painter Richardson, and were furnished by a Doctor Wright, an old clergyman who visited the poet. (Masson, Memoir prefixed to the Eversley edition of the poems.)

[2] Thomas Ellwood (1639–1713), a Quaker, who underwent much persecution for his faith, made the acquaintance of Milton in 1662, and became his fast friend and assistant in his work.

him, or of taking down the immortal accents which flowed from his lips.

These are perhaps foolish feelings. Yet we cannot be ashamed of them; nor shall we be sorry if what we have written shall in any degree excite them in other minds. We are not much in the habit of idolizing either the living or the dead. And we think that there is no more certain indication of a weak and ill-regulated intellect than that propensity which, for want of a better name, we will venture to christen Boswellism. But there are a few characters which have stood the closest scrutiny and the severest tests, which have been tried in the furnace and have proved pure, which have been weighed in the balance and have not been found wanting, which have been declared sterling by the general consent of mankind, and which are visibly stamped with the image and superscription of the Most High. These great men we trust that we know how to prize, and of these was Milton. The sight of his books, the sound of his name, are pleasant to us. His thoughts resemble those celestial fruits and flowers which the Virgin Martyr[1] of Massinger sent down from the gardens of Paradise to the earth, and which were distinguished from the productions of other soils, not only by superior bloom and sweetness, but by miraculous efficacy to invigorate and to heal. They are powerful, not only to delight, but to elevate and purify. Nor do we envy the man who can study either the life or the

He has left in his *Autobiography* many interesting details with regard to his intercourse with the poet, whom he somewhat incited to write *Paradise Regained*. See Whittier's *Snow-Bound*.

[1] One of the best of the plays of Philip Massinger (1583–1640) is an Elizabethan dramatists.

writings of the great poet and patriot without aspiring to emulate, not indeed the sublime works with which his genius has enriched our literature, but the zeal with which he labored for the public good, the fortitude with which he endured every private calamity, the lofty disdain with which he looked down on temptations and dangers, the deadly hatred which he bore to bigots and tyrants, and the faith which he so sternly kept with his country and with his fame.[1]

[1] Matthew Arnold (in *A French Critic on Milton*) finds fault with the rhetoric of this passage, and justly, if we are to consider Macaulay as playing the part of a critic. But Arnold here, as elsewhere, seems not sufficiently to remember that criticism is not the whole end of literature. Macaulay was endeavoring to persuade his readers to catch some of his own enthusiasm for Milton, — a worthy purpose, which was furthered by his remarkably effective rhetoric.

Jos. Addison

THE LIFE AND WRITINGS OF ADDISON.

PREFATORY NOTE.

THIS elaborate essay appeared in the *Edinburgh Review* for July, 1843. It was nominally a review of Miss Aikin's *Life of Joseph Addison*, but was really a tribute of Macaulay's own to the character and attainments of a man whom he heartily admired. Its rank among the literary essays is high, but after all it reaches only a half-way position between the youthful exaggeration and *élan* of the essay on Milton, and the chastened strength of the essay on Johnson. Considered merely from the point of view of style, it is, of course, worthy of high praise; but from the point of view of criticism, it is fairly subject to severe animadversion. Macaulay commits the common error of imagining, or seeming to imagine, that he cannot do justice to one man of genius without running down all who may be regarded as his competitors. So in our own day the lovers of Shelley seem to consider themselves obliged to act toward Lord Byron. But such partisanship is foreign to the truly catholic critic; and however much we may admire the splendid service that Macaulay was always willing and able to render to the men and causes he admired, we must never forget that his real function was that of an advocate, not of a critic. In the case of Addison the exaggerated note in Macaulay's praise was probably due, as Matthew Arnold has pointed out, to his own inability to see where his favorite writer fell short as a moralist, a critic, and a man. With all his scholarship and all his travel, Macaulay remained at bottom a middle-class Englishman, and therefore the commonplace character of much of Addison's work as a moralist and a critic did not strike him. These same middle-class prejudices also blinded him to the coldness, the formal correctness, that make Addison's character unattractive to many people, while at the same time they rendered him utterly incapable of appreciating the magnetic charm of the far from cold

and correct Steele. In short, the essay on Addison suffers greatly from the defects of its author's qualities, and, unlike the tribute to Milton, is not aggressive enough in its partisanship to sweep the reader away. Nevertheless, when all is said, Macaulay's virtues here, as elsewhere, outweigh his faults, and there are few essays in our language that so well repay careful study on the part of the reader who desires to be stimulated toward the attainment of a wider culture.

With regard to Addison little need be said. That he is not a profound moralist, that he is a conventional rather than a subtle critic, has been discovered by many a reader who did not have Matthew Arnold to guide him; but if this reader has not also discovered that for playful humor and humane satire, Joseph Addison has not his equal in English literature, he should at once throw down his huge modern daily and turn to those short periodical essays that once formed a necessary accompaniment of every fashionable London breakfast. Whether Addison might have made himself the greatest of English novelists, as Macaulay avers, is more than doubtful; but that he did make himself one of the most graceful and fascinating of essayists, is hardly matter for discussion. One might as well deny the greatness of Meissonier as a genre painter as to deny that of Addison as a writer of sympathetic character sketches, of playful satires, of gracefully imaginative allegories. But Meissonier is not a Rembrandt, and Addison is not a Balzac or a Fielding. Yet to be the Addison who described Sir Roger's death and conceived *The Vision of Mirza* is glory enough for one man. If now the student or general reader wish to become better acquainted with this true though limited genius, he need have no difficulty in obtaining proper helps. For the entire works, Greene's edition is probably to be preferred; for *The Spectator* alone, Professor Morley's. The *Sir Roger de Coverley Papers* may be had separately in the *Riverside Literature Series;* and *The Tatler, The Guardian,* and the other periodicals are all included in Chalmers's *British Essayists.* The most recent biography is Mr. Courthope's in the *English Men of Letters,* but the lives of Steele by Aitken and Austin Dobson must also be consulted. For criticism one will naturally go to the histories of English literature and to Thackeray's *English Humorists.* Hare's *Walks in Rome* and the same author's *Walks in London* will clear up any topographical doubts. The names of German writers which appear may be further *explained by* reference to Wells's Modern German Literature.

THE LIFE AND WRITINGS OF ADDISON.

SOME reviewers are of opinion that a lady who dares to publish a book renounces by that act the franchises appertaining to her sex, and can claim no exemption from the utmost rigor of critical procedure. From that opinion we dissent. We admit, indeed, that, in a country which boasts of many female writers eminently qualified by their talents and acquirements to influence the public mind, it would be of most pernicious consequence that inaccurate history or unsound philosophy should be suffered to pass uncensured, merely because the offender chanced to be a lady. But we conceive that, on such occasions, a critic would do well to imitate the courteous knight who found himself compelled by duty to keep the lists against Bradamante. He, we are told, defended successfully the cause of which he was the champion, but, before the fight began, exchanged Balisarda for a less deadly sword, of which he carefully blunted the point and edge.[1]

Nor are the immunities of sex the only immunities which Miss Aikin[2] may rightfully plead. Several of

[1] See Ariosto's (1474–1533) *Orlando Furioso*, xlv. 68. The courteous knight was Ruggiero. With Balisarda compare the names of other famous swords, — *e. g.*, Arthur's Excalibur, Hrunting (*Beowulf*), etc.

[2] Miss Lucy Aikin (1781–1864) was a daughter of Dr. John Aikin, a well-known critic and compiler, and a sister of the bet-

her works, and especially the very pleasing "Memoirs of the Court of King James I.," have fully entitled her to the privileges enjoyed by good writers. One of those privileges we hold to be this: that such writers, when, either from the unlucky choice of a subject or from the indolence too often produced by success, they happen to fail, shall not be subjected to the severe discipline which it is sometimes necessary to inflict upon dunces and impostors,[1] but shall merely be reminded by a gentle touch, like that with which the Laputan flapper[2] roused his dreaming lord, that it is high time to wake.

Our readers will probably infer from what we have said that Miss Aikin's book has disappointed us. The truth is, that she is not well acquainted with her subject. No person who is not familiar with the political and literary history of England during the reigns of William III., of Anne, and of George I., can possibly write a good life of Addison. Now, we mean no reproach to Miss Aikin, and many will think that we pay her a compliment when we say that her studies have taken a different direction. She is better acquainted with Shakespeare and Raleigh than with Congreve and Prior, and is far more at home among the ruffs and peaked beards of Theobald's[3] than among the Steenkirks[4] and flowing periwigs which

ter known Mrs. Barbauld. She wrote memoirs of the courts of Elizabeth and Charles I., besides the work mentioned in the text.

[1] Macaulay is probably alluding to his celebrated scathing review of Mr. Robert Montgomery's poems, which appeared in the *Edinburgh* for April, 1830.

[2] See *Gulliver's Travels*, Laputa, chap. ii.

[3] The country-seat of Elizabeth's famous minister, William Cecil, Lord Burleigh (1520–1598.)

[4] Loose cravats of fine lace, so called because they came into fashion after the defeat of William III. at Steenkirk, in Holland.

surrounded Queen Anne's tea-table at Hampton.[1] She seems to have written about the Elizabethan age, because she had read much about it; she seems, on the other hand, to have read a little about the age of Addison, because she had determined to write about it. The consequence is, that she has had to describe men and things without having either a correct or a vivid idea of them, and that she has often fallen into errors of a very serious kind. The reputation which Miss Aikin has justly earned stands so high, and the charm of Addison's letters is so great, that a second edition of this work may probably be required. If so, we hope that every paragraph will be revised, and that every date and fact about which there can be the smallest doubt will be carefully verified.

To Addison himself we are bound by a sentiment as much like affection as any sentiment can be which is inspired by one who has been sleeping a hundred and twenty years in Westminster Abbey. We trust, however, that this feeling will not betray us into that abject idolatry which we have often had occasion to reprehend in others,[2] and which seldom fails to make both the idolater and the idol ridiculous. A man of genius and virtue is but a man. All his powers cannot be equally developed, nor can we expect from him perfect self-knowledge. We need not, therefore, hesitate to admit that Addison has left us some compositions which do not rise above mediocrity, some heroic poems hardly equal to Parnell's,[3] some criticism

[1] Hampton Court, built by Wolsey, a favorite residence of English sovereigns.

[2] See for example the review of Dr. Nares's *Memoirs of Burleigh* in the *Edinburgh* for April, 1832.

[3] Thomas Parnell (1679–1717), a poet chiefly remembered for his *Hermit*. "Heroic poems" must mean poems in the heroic

as superficial as Dr. Blair's,[1] and a tragedy not very much better than Dr. Johnson's.[2] It is praise enough to say of a writer that, in a high department of literature in which many eminent writers have distinguished themselves, he has had no equal; and this may with strict justice be said of Addison.

As a man he may not have deserved the adoration which he received from those who, bewitched by his fascinating society, and indebted for all the comforts of life to his generous and delicate friendship, worshiped him nightly in his favorite temple at Button's.[3] But, after full inquiry and impartial reflection, we have long been convinced that he deserved as much love and esteem as can be justly claimed by any of our infirm and erring race. Some blemishes may undoubtedly be detected in his character; but the more carefully it is examined, the more will it appear, to use the phrase of the old anatomists, sound in the noble parts, free from all taint of perfidy, of cowardice, of cruelty, of ingratitude, of envy. Men may easily be named in whom some particular good disposition has been more conspicuous than in Addison. But the just harmony of qualities, the exact temper between the stern and the humane virtues, the habitual observance of every law, not only of moral rectitude, but of moral grace and dignity, distinguish him from all men who have been tried by

couplet. (See page 107, note 2.) The *Campaign* is heroic in matter as well, but Parnell wrote nothing to which it could well be compared in this respect.

[1] Dr. Hugh Blair (1718–1800), a Scotch divine whose treatise on Rhetoric was once a noted book and is still worth examination.

[2] *Irene.* See the essay on Johnson, page 27.

[3] For this noted coffee-house, see the essay on Johnson, page 57, note 2; and Greene's note to *Spectator* No. 1.

equally strong temptations, and about whose conduct we possess equally full information.

His father was the Rev. Lancelot Addison, who, though eclipsed by his more celebrated son, made some figure in the world, and occupies with credit two folio pages in the "Biographia Britannica."[1] Lancelot was sent up, as a poor scholar, from Westmoreland to Queen's College, Oxford, in the time of the Commonwealth; made some progress in learning; became, like most of his fellow-students, a violent Royalist; lampooned the heads of the university, and was forced to ask pardon on his bended knees. When he had left college, he earned a humble subsistence by reading the liturgy of the fallen church to the families of those sturdy squires whose manor houses were scattered over the Wild of Sussex.[2] After the Restoration, his loyalty was rewarded with the post of chaplain to the garrison of Dunkirk.[3] When Dunkirk was sold to France, he lost his employment. But Tangier had been ceded by Portugal to England as a part of the marriage portion of the Infanta[4] Catharine; and to Tangier Lancelot Addison was sent. A more miserable situation can hardly be conceived. It was difficult to say whether the unfortunate settlers were more tormented by the heats or

[1] Appeared in seven folio volumes between 1747 and 1766, the first important undertaking of its kind in Great Britain.

[2] Wild, *i. e.*, Weald. See *Encyclopædia Britannica s. v.* "Sussex" for an account of the district.

[3] Dunkirk, a seaport of France, ceded to Cromwell in 1658, and ceded back by Charles II. in 1667, to the great disgust of his people.

[4] *Infanta* is the title applied to Spanish or Portuguese princesses of the blood royal. Here Catharine of Braganza, who married Charles II. in 1662.

by the rains; by the soldiers within the wall, or by the Moors without it. One advantage the chaplain had. He enjoyed an excellent opportunity of studying the history and manners of Jews and Mohammedans; and of this opportunity he appears to have made excellent use. On his return to England, after some years of banishment, he published an interesting volume on the Polity and Religion of Barbary, and another on the Hebrew Customs and the State of Rabbinical Learning. He rose to eminence in his profession, and became one of the royal chaplains, a doctor of divinity, Archdeacon of Salisbury, and Dean of Lichfield. It is said that he would have been made a bishop after the Revolution, if he had not given offense to the government by strenuously opposing, in the Convocation of 1689, the liberal policy of William and Tillotson.[1]

In 1672, not long after Dr. Addison's return from Tangier, his son Joseph was born.[2] Of Joseph's childhood we know little. He learned his rudiments at schools in his father's neighborhood, and was then sent to the Charter House.[3] The anecdotes which are popularly related about his boyish tricks do not harmonize very well with what we know of his riper years. There remains a tradition that he was the ringleader in a barring-out; and another tradition that he ran away from school, and hid himself in a

[1] John Tillotson (1630–1694), made Archbishop of Canterbury by William III., was noted for his moderation and the eloquence of his sermons, which were long read and admired.

[2] May 1st, at Milston in Wilts.

[3] Charter House — a famous charity consisting of a hospital, chapel, and school, founded in 1611. Among its noted scholars, besides Addison and Steele, have been Blackstone, Grote, Thackeray, Thirlwall, and John Wesley.

wood, where he fed on berries and slept in a hollow tree, till, after a long search, he was discovered and brought home. If these stories be true, it would be curious to know by what moral discipline so mutinous and enterprising a lad was transformed into the gentlest and most modest of men.

We have abundant proof that, whatever Joseph's pranks may have been, he pursued his studies vigorously and successfully. At fifteen he was not only fit for the university, but carried thither a classical taste and a stock of learning which would have done honor to a master of arts. He was entered at Queen's College, Oxford; but he had not been many months there when some of his Latin verses fell by accident into the hands of Dr. Lancaster,[1] Dean of Magdalen College. The young scholar's diction and versification were already such as veteran professors might envy. Dr. Lancaster was desirous to serve a boy of such promise; nor was an opportunity long wanting. The Revolution had just taken place, and nowhere had it been hailed with more delight than at Magdalen College. That great and opulent corporation had been treated by James, and by his chancellor,[2] with an insolence and injustice which, even in such a prince and in such a minister, may justly excite amazement, and which had done more than even the prosecution of the bishops to alienate the Church of

[1] Dr. William Lancaster (1650–1711) seems to have been afterwards Provost of Queen's College, but not Dean of Magdalen.

[2] The infamous Judge Jeffreys (1648–1689), noted for his cruelty and brutality. For the treatment of Magdalen College (founded in 1466, pronounced *Maudlin*), and the famous trial and acquittal of the seven Bishops who in 1687 refused to read in their churches James's declaration of indulgence, see Macaulay's *History*, chap. viii.

England from the throne. A president[1] duly elected had been violently expelled from his dwelling; a Papist[2] had been set over the society by a royal mandate; the fellows who, in conformity with their oaths, had refused to submit to this usurper, had been driven forth from their quiet cloisters and gardens to die of want, or to live on charity. But the day of redress and retribution speedily came. The intruders were ejected; the venerable house was again inhabited by its old inmates; learning flourished under the rule of the wise and virtuous Hough; and with learning was united a mild and liberal spirit too often wanting in the princely colleges of Oxford. In consequence of the troubles through which the society had passed, there had been no valid election of new members during the year 1688. In 1689, therefore, there was twice the ordinary number of vacancies; and thus Dr. Lancaster found it easy to procure for his young friend admittance to the advantages of a foundation then generally esteemed the wealthiest in Europe.

At Magdalen, Addison resided during ten years. He was at first one of those scholars who are called "Demies,"[3] but was subsequently elected a fellow. His college is still proud of his name; his portrait still hangs in the hall; and strangers are still told that his favorite walk was under the elms which fringe the meadow on the banks of the Cherwell. It is said, and is highly probable, that he was distin-

[1] John Hough (1651–1743), Bishop successively of Oxford, Lichfield, and Worcester.

[2] James first tried to force a wretched person named Anthony Farmer on the college. Afterwards he recommended Parker, Bishop of Oxford, who was not an avowed Papist.

[3] *Demies* — the name seems to be peculiar to the holders of certain scholarships at Magdalen — half-fellows.

guished among his fellow-students by the delicacy of his feelings, by the shyness of his manners, and by the assiduity with which he often prolonged his studies far into the night. It is certain that his reputation for ability and learning stood high. Many years later the ancient doctors of Magdalen continued to talk in their common room of his boyish compositions, and expressed their sorrow that no copy of exercises so remarkable had been preserved.

It is proper, however, to remark that Miss Aikin has committed the error, very pardonable in a lady, of overrating Addison's classical attainments. In one department of learning, indeed, his proficiency was such as it is hardly possible to overrate. His knowledge of the Latin poets, from Lucretius and Catullus down to Claudian and Prudentius,[1] was singularly exact and profound. He understood them thoroughly, entered into their spirit, and had the finest and most discriminating perception of all their peculiarities of style and melody; nay, he copied their manner with admirable skill, and surpassed, we think, all their British imitators who had preceded him, Buchanan[2] and Milton alone excepted. This is high praise; and beyond this we cannot with justice go.

[1] Lucretius (95–55 B. C.) and Catullus (86–46 B. C.) represent the better and earlier Latin poets; Claudian and Prudentius (fourth century A. D.), the latest and less worthy.

[2] George Buchanan (1506–1582), one of the greatest of the early writers of Scotland, was tutor to Mary, Queen of Scots (whose life he wrote in Latin), and to her son James VI., afterwards the pedant king of England. He was prominent in the civil and ecclesiastical affairs of his troubled period, and left behind a large body of writings, of which his Latin poems and his Paraphrase of the Psalms are best remembered. Milton thought very highly of him.

It is clear that Addison's serious attention during his residence at the university was almost entirely concentrated on Latin poetry, and that, if he did not wholly neglect other provinces of ancient literature, he vouchsafed to them only a cursory glance. He does not appear to have attained more than an ordinary acquaintance with the political and moral writers of Rome; nor was his own Latin prose by any means equal to his Latin verse. His knowledge of Greek, though doubtless such as was in his time thought respectable at Oxford, was evidently less than that which many lads now carry away every year from Eton and Rugby. A minute examination of his works, if we had time to make such an examination, would fully bear out these remarks. We will briefly advert to a few of the facts on which our judgment is grounded.

Great praise is due to the notes which Addison appended to his version of the second and third books of the "Metamorphoses." Yet those notes, while they show him to have been in his own domain an accomplished scholar, show also how confined that domain was. They are rich in apposite references to Virgil, Statius,[1] and Claudian, but they contain not a single illustration drawn from the Greek poets. Now if, in the whole compass of Latin literature, there be a passage which stands in need of illustration drawn from the Greek poets, it is the story of Pentheus in the third book of the "Metamorphoses." Ovid was indebted for that story to Euripides and Theocritus,[2] both of whom he has sometimes followed

[1] P. Papinius Statius (61–96 A. D.), author of the *Thebais*.

[2] See Mahaffy's *History of Classical Greek Literature* and the Introduction to Lang's *Theocritus*.

minutely. But neither to Euripides nor to Theocritus does Addison make the faintest allusion; and we therefore believe that we do not wrong him by supposing that he had little or no knowledge of their works.

His travels in Italy, again, abound with classical quotations happily introduced; but scarcely one of those quotations is in prose. He draws more illustrations from Ausonius and Manilius [1] than from Cicero. Even his notions of the political and military affairs of the Romans seem to be derived from poets and poetasters. Spots made memorable by events which have changed the destinies of the world, and which have been worthily recorded by great historians, bring to his mind only scraps of some ancient versifier. In the gorge of the Apennines he naturally remembers the hardships which Hannibal's army endured, and proceeds to cite, not the authentic narrative of Polybius, not the picturesque narrative of Livy, but the languid hexameters of Silius Italicus. On the banks of the Rubicon he never thinks of Plutarch's lively description, or of the stern conciseness of the Commentaries, or of those Letters to Atticus which so forcibly express the alternations of hope and fear in a sensitive mind at a great crisis. His only authority for the events of the civil war is Lucan.[2]

[1] D. Magnus Ausonius (fourth century A. D.) and Caius Manilius (first century A. D.), minor and obscure Latin poets, the first named, however, being occasionally read and referred to.

[2] Of the names mentioned in this passage the student will be familiar with those of Hannibal, Livy, and Plutarch; he will at once connect the Rubicon and the Commentaries with Cæsar and the Letters with Cicero; Polybius he should remember as the Greek historian, born just before the defeat of Hannibal at Zama, and hence much more of an authority than Silius Italicus,

All the best ancient works of art at Rome and Florence are Greek. Addison saw them, however, without recalling one single verse of Pindar, of Callimachus, or of the Attic dramatists;[1] but they brought to his recollection innumerable passages of Horace, Juvenal, Statius, and Ovid.

The same may be said of the treatise on medals. In that pleasing work we find about three hundred passages extracted with great judgment from the Roman poets; but we do not recollect a single passage taken from any Roman orator or historian, and we are confident that not a line is quoted from any Greek writer. No person who had derived all his information on the subject of medals from Addison would suspect that the Greek coins were in historical interest equal, and in beauty of execution far superior, to those of Rome.

If it were necessary to find any further proof that Addison's classical knowledge was confined within narrow limits, that proof would be furnished by his "Essay on the Evidences of Christianity."[2] The Roman poets throw little or no light on the literary and historical questions which he is under the necessity of examining in that essay. He is, therefore, left completely in the dark; and it is melancholy to

who wrote his poem on the Punic War in the first century A. D.; and he should at least recall of M. Annæus Lucan's (A. D. 38–65 ?) *Pharsalia*, which described the civil war between Pompey and Cæsar, the often quoted verse: —

"Victrix causa deis placuit, sed victa Catoni."

[1] See Mahaffy for Pindar and the dramatists. Callimachus was an Alexandrian poet of the third century B. C., of whose voluminous works only some epigrams and miscellaneous pieces are extant.

[2] See page 209.

see how helplessly he gropes his way from blunder to blunder. He assigns as grounds for his religious belief stories as absurd as that of the Cock Lane ghost,[1] and forgeries as rank as Ireland's Vortigern;[2] puts faith in the lie about the Thundering Legion;[3] is convinced that Tiberius moved the senate to admit Jesus among the gods;[4] and pronounces the letter of Abgarus, King of Edessa,[5] to be a record of great authority. Nor were these errors the effects of superstition, for to superstition Addison was by no means prone. The truth is, that he was writing about what he did not understand.

Miss Aikin has discovered a letter from which it appears that, while Addison resided at Oxford, he was one of several writers whom the booksellers en-

[1] See the essay on Johnson, page 40, note 2.

[2] William Henry Ireland (1777–1835) ranks with Lauder and Macpherson and Psalmanazar among literary forgers. He forged Shakespeare documents and pretended to have found a new version of *Lear* and an entirely new play, *Vortigern and Rowena*. Malone exposed the imposture, but enough people were gulled to enable Ireland to get his forgeries published and his *Vortigern* acted at Drury Lane, where it was a dismal failure. In 1805 he published a confession of his guilt, and for thirty years continued to do literary work in poverty and obscurity.

[3] This name was given to a legion of Christians serving in the army of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius against the Quadi. Their prayer for rain to quench their thirst was said to have been followed by a thunder shower which accomplished their desires, while killing numbers of the enemy by lightning.

[4] The story rests on the authority of Tertullian, the celebrated Christian Father of the end of the second century.

[5] Eusebius, the Church historian, relates how this king was ill and wrote a letter to Christ beseeching Him to come and heal him. Christ replied by letter saying that He would send one of His disciples. After the resurrection St. Thomas sent Thaddæus, who performed the service.

gaged to make an English version of Herodotus; and she infers that he must have been a good Greek scholar. We can allow very little weight to this argument when we consider that his fellow-laborers were to have been Boyle and Blackmore.[1] Boyle is remembered chiefly as the nominal author of the worst book on Greek history and philology that ever was printed; and this book, bad as it is, Boyle was unable to produce without help. Of Blackmore's attainments in the ancient tongues, it may be sufficient to say, that in his prose he has confounded an aphorism with an apothegm, and that when, in his verse, he treats of classical subjects, his habit is to regale his readers with four false quantities[2] to a page.

It is probable that the classical acquirements of Addison were of as much service to him as if they had been more extensive. The world generally gives its admiration, not to the man who does what nobody else even attempts to do, but to the man who does best what multitudes do well. Bentley was so immeasurably superior to all the other scholars of his time, that few among them could discover his superiority.

[1] Charles Boyle (1676–1731), nephew of the great philosopher, edited the so-called *Epistles of Phalaris* with the assistance of Atterbury (see Macaulay's essay on the latter), which led to the publication of Dr. Richard Bentley's (1662–1742), famous *Dissertation* which proved the spuriousness of the Epistles and established Bentley's fame as the greatest of English classical scholars. Sir Richard Blackmore (1650?–1729), was a better physician than poet, and has been for nearly two centuries the butt of critics. See Johnson's *Life* of him.

[2] Ancient poetry depended on the quantity of the syllables, so a mistake in this matter was a proof of Blackmore's lack of

But the accomplishment in which Addison excelled his contemporaries was then, as it is now, highly valued and assiduously cultivated at all English seats of learning. Everybody who had been at a public school had written Latin verses: many had written such verses with tolerable success, and were quite able to appreciate, though by no means able to rival, the skill with which Addison imitated Virgil. His lines on the "Barometer" and the "Bowling Green"[1] were applauded by hundreds to whom the "Dissertation on the Epistles of Phalaris" was as unintelligible as the hieroglyphics on an obelisk.

Purity of style, and an easy flow of numbers, are common to all Addison's Latin poems. Our favorite piece is "The Battle of the Cranes and Pygmies," for in that piece we discern a gleam of the fancy and humor which many years later enlivened thousands of breakfast tables. Swift boasted that he was never known to steal a hint, and he certainly owed as little to his predecessors as any modern writer. Yet we cannot help suspecting that he borrowed, perhaps unconsciously, one of the happiest touches in his "Voyage to Lilliput" from Addison's verses. Let our readers judge.

"The Emperor," says Gulliver, "is taller by about the breadth of my nail than any of his court, which alone is enough to strike an awe into the beholders."

About thirty years before "Gulliver's Travels" appeared, Addison wrote these lines: —

> "Jamque acies inter medias sese arduus infert
> Pygmeadum ductor, qui, majestate verendus,

[1] *Sphæristerium.* Addison's Latin verse is small in quantity.

Incessuque gravis, reliquos supereminet omnes
Mole gigantea, mediamque asurgit in ulnam." [1]

The Latin poems of Addison were greatly and justly admired, both at Oxford and Cambridge, before his name had ever been heard by the wits who thronged the coffee-houses round Drury Lane Theatre.[2] In his twenty-second year he ventured to appear before the public as a writer of English verse. He addressed some complimentary lines to Dryden,[3] who, after many triumphs and many reverses, had at length reached a secure and lonely eminence among the literary men of that age. Dryden appears to have been much gratified by the young scholar's praise, and an interchange of civilities and good offices followed. Addison was probably introduced by Dryden to Congreve, and was certainly presented by Congreve to Charles Montague,[4] who was then chancellor of the exchequer, and leader of the Whig party in the House of Commons.

At this time, Addison seemed inclined to devote himself to poetry. He published a translation of part of the fourth "Georgic," "Lines to King William," and other performances of equal value; that

[1] The verses occur about the middle of the *Prœlium inter Pygmœos et Grues Commissum*, and may be roughly rendered: "And now into the midst of the squadrons the bold leader of the Pygmies forces his way, who, venerable in majesty and commanding in his movements, towers over all the rest with his gigantic stature, and rises to the height of the elbow."

[2] See the essay on Johnson, page 26, note.

[3] John Dryden (1631–1700) had seven years to live, and his best work (the *Fables* and *Alexander's Feast*) to do when these lines were written (1693).

[4] See the essay on Milton, page 11, note 2. He was afterwards Earl of Halifax, and must not be confused with other statesmen of the same name, one of whom is mentioned in this essay.

is to say, of no value at all. But in those days the public was in the habit of receiving with applause pieces which would now have little chance of obtaining the Newdigate prize or the Seatonian prize.[1] And the reason is obvious. The heroic couplet[2] was then the favorite measure. The art of arranging words in that measure, so that the lines may flow smoothly, that the accents may fall correctly, that the rhymes may strike the ear strongly, and that there may be a pause at the end of every distich, is an art as mechanical as that of mending a kettle or shoeing a horse, and may be learned by any human being who has sense enough to learn anything. But, like other mechanical arts, it was gradually improved by means of many experiments and many failures. It was reserved for Pope to discover the trick, to make himself complete master of it, and to teach it to everybody else. From the time when his "Pastorals" appeared, heroic versification became matter of rule and compass; and before long all artists were on a level. Hundreds of dunces who never blundered on one happy thought or expression were able to write reams of couplets, which, as far as euphony was concerned, could not be distinguished from those of Pope himself, and which very clever writers of the reign of Charles II. — Rochester,[3] for example, or Marvell,[4]

[1] Prizes for English verse awarded at Oxford and Cambridge respectively.

[2] That is, the iambic pentameter, in couplets that in the hands of Pope and his school do not overlap.

[3] John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester (1647–1680), author of the famous epitaph on Charles II., and a poet capable of much better work than the mass of his poetry, which is unrivaled for filth and obscenity.

[4] Andrew Marvell (1620–1678) was a politician, a poet of con-

or Oldham[1] — would have contemplated with admiring despair.

Ben Jonson was a great man, Hoole[2] a very small man. But Hoole, coming after Pope, had learned how to manufacture decasyllable verses, and poured them forth by thousands and tens of thousands, all as well turned, as smooth, and as like each other as the blocks which have passed through Mr. Brunel's[3] mill in the dockyard at Portsmouth. Ben's heroic couplets resemble blocks rudely hewn out by an unpracticed hand with a blunt hatchet. Take as a specimen his translation of a celebrated passage in the "Æneid:" —

> "This child our parent earth, stirr'd up with spite
> Of all the gods, brought forth, and, as some write,
> She was last sister of that giant race
> That sought to scale Jove's court, right swift of pace,
> And swifter far of wing, a monster vast
> And dreadful. Look, how many plumes are placed
> On her huge corpse, so many waking eyes
> Stick underneath, and, which may stranger rise
> In the report, as many tongues she wears."[4]

Compare with these jagged, misshapen distichs the neat fabric which Hoole's machine produces in unlim-

siderable powers (see the selections from him in Palgrave's *Golden Treasury*), and a friend of Milton's.

[1] John Oldham (1655–1683) was a predecessor of Dryden in writing vigorous poetic satires.

[2] John Hoole (1727–1803), chiefly known as a translator of Tasso and Ariosto.

[3] Sir Mark Isambard Brunel (1769–1849), a French engineer who invented a plan for making block pulleys for ships, which was successfully tried at Portsmouth. He was also the engineer of the Thames Tunnel.

[4] The lines are to be found in Jonson's *The Poetaster*, v., i in which Virgil is a character. They are a translation of *Æneid* iv. 178–183.

ited abundance. We take the first lines on which we open in his version of Tasso. They are neither better nor worse than the rest: —

> "O thou, whoe'er thou art, whose steps are led,
> By choice or fate, these lonely shores to tread,
> No greater wonders east or west can boast
> Than yon small island on the pleasing coast.
> If e'er thy sight would blissful scenes explore,
> The current pass, and seek the further shore." [1]

Ever since the time of Pope there has been a glut of lines of this sort; and we are now as little disposed to admire a man for being able to write them as for being able to write his name. But in the days of William III. such versification was rare; and a rhymer who had any skill in it passed for a great poet, just as, in the dark ages, a person who could write his name passed for a great clerk. Accordingly, Duke, Stepney, Granville, Walsh,[2] and others whose only title to fame was that they said in tolerable metre what might have been as well said in prose, or what was not worth saying at all, were honored with marks of distinction which ought to be reserved for genius. With these Addison must have ranked, if he had not earned true and lasting glory by performances which very little resembled his juvenile poems.

[1] *Jerusalem Delivered*, xiv. 58.

[2] Richard Duke (died 1710–11), George Stepney (1663–1707), George Granville, afterwards Lord Lansdowne (1667?–1735), and William Walsh (1663–1709) are all among the poets who figure in Johnson's *Lives;* but even there they take up little room. They are all forgotten save Walsh, who is remembered through his connection with Pope and through his amusing poem *The Despairing Lover* (given in Ward's *Poets*). Macaulay's criticism of Addison's juvenile poetry is eminently just.

Dryden was now busied with Virgil, and obtained from Addison a critical preface to the "Georgics." In return for this service, and for other services of the same kind, the veteran poet, in the postscript to the translation of the "Æneid," complimented his young friend with great liberality, and indeed with more liberality than sincerity. He affected to be afraid that his own performance would not sustain a comparison with the version of the fourth "Georgic," by "the most ingenious Mr. Addison of Oxford." "After his bees," added Dryden, "my latter swarm is scarcely worth the hiving."[1]

The time had now arrived when it was necessary for Addison to choose a calling. Everything seemed to point his course towards the clerical profession. His habits were regular, his opinions orthodox. His college had large ecclesiastical preferment in its gift, and boasts that it has given at least one bishop to almost every see in England. Dr. Lancelot Addison held an honorable place in the Church, and had set his heart on seeing his son a clergyman. It is clear, from some expressions in the young man's rhymes, that his intention was to take orders. But Charles Montague interfered. Montague had first brought himself into notice by verses well timed and not contemptibly written, but never, we think, rising above mediocrity. Fortunately for himself and for his country, he early quitted poetry, in which he could never have attained a rank as high as that of Dorset[2] or

[1] A reference to the subject matter of the fourth *Georgic*, which treats of bees, and had been translated by Addison.

[2] Charles Sackville, Earl of Dorset (1637–1706), a famous patron of men of letters and a poet who has a place in Ward's collection through such graceful society verse as his *Song written at Sea*.

Rochester, and turned his mind to official and parliamentary business. It is written that the ingenious person who undertook to instruct Rasselas,[1] prince of Abyssinia, in the art of flying, ascended an eminence, waved his wings, sprang into the air, and instantly dropped into the lake. But it is added that the wings, which were unable to support him through the sky, bore him up effectually as soon as he was in the water. This is no bad type of the fate of Charles Montague, and of men like him. When he attempted to soar into the regions of poetical invention, he altogether failed; but, as soon as he had descended from that ethereal elevation into a lower and grosser element, his talents instantly raised him above the mass. He became a distinguished financier, debater, courtier, and party leader. He still retained his fondness for the pursuits of his early days; but he showed that fondness, not by wearying the public with his own feeble performances, but by discovering and encouraging literary excellence in others. A crowd of wits and poets, who would easily have vanquished him as a competitor, revered him as a judge and a patron. In his plans for the encouragement of learning, he was cordially supported by the ablest and most virtuous of his colleagues, the Lord Chancellor Somers.[2] Though both these great statesmen had a sincere love of letters, it was not solely from a love of letters that they were desirous to enlist youths of high intellectual qualifications in the public service. The Revolution had altered the whole system of government. Before that event, the press had been controlled by censors,

[1] See the essay on Johnson, page 35.

[2] See the essay on Milton, page 50, note 2. Besides Addison's youthful verses to him, the student ought to read the tribute which the *matured man* paid to him in *The Freeholder*, No. 39.

and the Parliament had sat only two months in eight years. Now the press was free, and had begun to exercise unprecedented influence on the public mind. Parliament met annually and sat long. The chief power in the State had passed to the House of Commons. At such a conjuncture it was natural that literary and oratorical talents should rise in value. There was danger that a government which neglected such talents might be subverted by them. It was, therefore, a profound and enlightened policy which led Montague and Somers to attach such talents to the Whig party by the strongest ties both of interest and of gratitude.

It is remarkable that in a neighboring country we have recently seen similar effects follow from similar causes. The Revolution of July, 1830, established representative government in France. The men of letters instantly rose to the highest importance in the State.[1] At the present moment, most of the persons whom we see at the head both of the Administration and of the Opposition have been professors, historians, journalists, poets. The influence of the literary class in England during the generation which followed the Revolution was great, but by no means so great as it has lately been in France; for in England the aristocracy of intellect had to contend with a powerful and deeply rooted aristocracy of a very different kind. France had no Somersets and Shrewsburies[2] to keep down her Addisons and Priors.

It was in the year 1699, when Addison had just

[1] For example, Thiers, Guizot, Chateaubriand.

[2] Representative Whig statesmen of the period, — Charles Seymour (1661–1748), Duke of Somerset, and Charles Talbot (1660–1[illegible]

completed his twenty-seventh year, that the course of his life was finally determined. Both the great chiefs of the ministry were kindly disposed towards him. In political opinions he already was, what he continued to be through life, a firm though a moderate Whig. He had addressed the most polished and vigorous of his early English lines to Somers, and had dedicated to Montague a Latin poem, truly Virgilian both in style and rhythm, on the peace of Ryswick. The wish of the young poet's great friends was, it should seem, to employ him in the service of the Crown abroad. But an intimate knowledge of the French language was a qualification indispensable to a diplomatist, and this qualification Addison had not acquired. It was therefore thought desirable that he should pass some time on the Continent in preparing himself for official employment. His own means were not such as would enable him to travel, but a pension of three hundred pounds a year was procured for him by the interest of the lord chancellor. It seems to have been apprehended that some difficulty might be started by the rulers of Magdalen College, but the chancellor of the exchequer wrote in the strongest terms to Hough. The State — such was the purport of Montague's letter — could not at that time spare to the Church such a man as Addison. Too many high civil posts were already occupied by adventurers, who, destitute of every liberal art and sentiment, at once pillaged and disgraced the country which they pretended to serve. It had become necessary to recruit for the public service from a very different class, — from that class of which Addison was the representative. The close of the minister's letter was remarkable. "I am called," he said, "an enemy

of the Church; but I will never do it any other injury than keeping Mr. Addison out of it."

This interference was successful; and in the summer of 1699 Addison, made a rich man by his pension, and still retaining his fellowship, quitted his beloved Oxford, and set out on his travels. He crossed from Dover to Calais, proceeded to Paris, and was received there with great kindness and politeness by a kinsman of his friend Montague, Charles, Earl of Manchester,[1] who had just been appointed ambassador to the court of France. The countess, a Whig and a toast,[2] was probably as gracious as her lord; for Addison long retained an agreeable recollection of the impression which she at this time made on him, and, in some lively lines written on the glasses of the Kit Cat Club,[3] described the envy which her cheeks, glowing with the genuine bloom of England, had excited among the painted beauties of Versailles.

Louis XIV. was at this time expiating the vices of his youth by a devotion which had no root in reason and bore no fruit of charity. The servile literature of France had changed its character to suit the changed character of the prince. No book appeared

[1] Charles Montagu, first Duke of Manchester (1660–1722), married Dodington, second daughter of Lord Brooke.

[2] That is, her beauty and charms were drunk to by men of fashion at their banquets. For the origin of the term, see *The Tatler*, No. 24.

[3] The Kit Cat Club was formed about 1700 by a number of prominent Whigs. It got its name, according to one story, from that of the maker of its mutton pies — Christopher Cat. Another story combines the name of the tavern-keeper, Christopher, with the sign of the tavern, a cat. One custom of the club was [illegible] name a toast, whereupon a glass was [illegible] of the lady.

that had not an air of sanctity. Racine,[1] who was just dead, had passed the close of his life in writing sacred dramas; and Dacier[2] was seeking for the Athanasian mysteries in Plato. Addison described this state of things in a short but lively and graceful letter to Montague. Another letter, written about the same time to the lord chancellor, conveyed the strongest assurances of gratitude and attachment. "The only return I can make to your lordship," said Addison, "will be to apply myself entirely to my business." With this view he quitted Paris and repaired to Blois, a place where it was supposed that the French language was spoken in its highest purity, and where not a single Englishman could be found. Here he passed some months pleasantly and profitably. Of his way of life at Blois, one of his associates, an abbé named Philippeaux, gave an account to Joseph Spence.[3] If this account is to be trusted, Addison studied much, mused much, talked little, had fits of absence, and either had no love affairs or was too discreet to confide them to the abbé. A man who, even when surrounded by fellow-countrymen and fellow-students, had always been

[1] Jean Racine (1639–1699), the famous French tragic dramatist.

[2] André Dacier (1652?–1722) was a distinguished French classical scholar, whose wife (Anne Lefèvre, 1654–1720) was also noted as a translator. He was at this time trying to connect the chief mysteries of Christianity (represented in the Athanasian theology, so called after Athanasius, the great Bishop of Alexandria, about 296–373 A. D.) with the philosophy of Plato.

[3] (1699–1768). He was Professor of Poetry at Oxford, and was intimate with Pope and other celebrities, of whom he has much to say in his *Anecdotes*.

remarkably shy and silent, was not likely to be loquacious in a foreign tongue and among foreign companions. But it is clear from Addison's letters, some of which were long after published in "The Guardian,"[1] that, while he appeared to be absorbed in his own meditations, he was really observing French society with that keen and sly yet not ill-natured side-glance which was peculiarly his own.

From Blois he returned to Paris, and, having now mastered the French language, found great pleasure in the society of French philosophers and poets. He gave an account, in a letter to Bishop Hough, of two highly interesting conversations, one with Malebranche, the other with Boileau.[2] Malebranche expressed great partiality for the English, and extolled the genius of Newton, but shook his head when Hobbes was[3] mentioned, and was indeed so unjust as to call the author of "The Leviathan" a poor, silly creature. Addison's modesty restrained him from fully relating, in his letter, the circumstances of his introduction to Boileau. Boileau, having survived the friends and rivals of his youth, — old, deaf, and melancholy, — lived in retirement, seldom went either to court or to the Academy,[4] and was almost inacces-

[1] Nos. 101 and 104.

[2] For Nicolas Malebranche (1638–1715), the philosopher, and Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux (1636–1711), the poetic satirist and literary dictator, see some history of French literature like Lanson's.

[3] Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), the philosopher, whose *Leviathan* is an important treatise in theoretical politics.

[4] The famous French Academy was founded in 1635 by Cardinal Richelieu. It grew out of a private club, but since its recognition by government has been the official representative of the cause of letters in France. It consists of forty members, ·llective work is its great Dictionary.

sible to strangers. Of the English and of English literature he knew nothing. He had hardly heard the name of Dryden. Some of our countrymen, in the warmth of their patriotism, have asserted that this ignorance must have been affected. We own that we see no ground for such a supposition. English literature was to the French of the age of Louis XIV. what German literature was to our own grandfathers. Very few, we suspect, of the accomplished men who, sixty or seventy years ago, used to dine in Leicester Square with Sir Joshua, or at Streatham with Mrs. Thrale,[1] had the slightest notion that Wieland was one of the first wits and poets, and Lessing,[2] beyond all dispute, the first critic in Europe. Boileau knew just as little about the "Paradise Lost," and about "Absalom and Achitophel;"[3] but he had read Addison's Latin poems, and admired them greatly. They had given him, he said, quite a new notion of the state of learning and taste among the English. Johnson will have it that these praises were insincere. "Nothing," says he, "is better known of Boileau than that he had an injudicious and peevish contempt of modern Latin; and therefore his profession of regard was probably the effect of his civility rather than approbation." Now, nothing is better known of Boileau than that he was singularly sparing of compliments. We do not remember that either

[1] See Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, and the essay on Johnson. Sir Joshua is, of course, Sir Joshua Reynolds, the great painter.

[2] Cristoph Martin Wieland (1733–1813), the author of *Oberon*, and Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–1781), famous for his dramas *Minna von Barnhelm*, *Emilia Galotti*, and *Nathan der Weise*, and especially for his great critical treatise *Laocoön, or the Limits of Painting and Poetry*.

[3] See Dryden's Works. It is his greatest political satire.

friendship or fear ever induced him to bestow praise on any composition which he did not approve. On literary questions his caustic, disdainful, and self-confident spirit rebelled against that authority to which everything else in France bowed down. He had the spirit to tell Louis XIV., firmly and even rudely, that his Majesty knew nothing about poetry, and admired verses which were detestable. What was there in Addison's position that could induce the satirist, whose stern and fastidious temper had been the dread of two generations, to turn sycophant for the first and last time? Nor was Boileau's contempt of modern Latin either injudicious or peevish. He thought, indeed, that no poem of the first order would ever be written in a dead language. And did he think amiss? Has not the experience of centuries confirmed his opinion? Boileau also thought it probable that, in the best modern Latin, a writer of the Augustan age would have detected ludicrous improprieties. And who can think otherwise? What modern scholar can honestly declare that he sees the smallest impurity in the style of Livy? Yet is it not certain that, in the style of Livy, Pollio,[1] whose taste had been formed on the banks of the Tiber, detected the inelegant idiom of the Po? Has any modern scholar understood Latin better than Frederick the Great understood French? Yet is it not notorious that Frederick the Great — after reading, speaking, writing French, and nothing but French, during more than half a century; after unlearning his mother

[1] C. Asinius Pollio (76 B. C.–4 A. D.), the famous Roman general, author, and patron of learning. (See Virgil's fourth *Eclogue*.) Nearly all his writings are lost save some letters to *Cicero*.

tongue in order to learn French; after living familiarly during many years with French associates — could not, to the last, compose in French without imminent risk of committing some mistake which would have moved a smile in the literary circles of Paris? Do we believe that Erasmus[1] and Fracastorius[2] wrote Latin as well as Dr. Robertson[3] and Sir Walter Scott wrote English? And are there not in the "Dissertation on India," the last of Dr. Robertson's works, in "Waverley," in "Marmion," Scotticisms at which a London apprentice would laugh? But does it follow, because we think thus, that we can find nothing to admire in the noble alcaics[4] of Gray, or in the playful elegiacs[5] of Vincent Bourne?[6] Surely not. Nor was Boileau so ignorant or tasteless as to be incapable of appreciating good modern Latin. In the very letter to which Johnson alludes,[7] Boileau

[1] Desiderius Erasmus (1467?–1536), the great Dutch humanist, theological controversialist, and satirist. See Froude's lectures on him, and Charles Reade's *The Cloister and the Hearth.*

[2] Hieronymo Fracastorio (1483–1553), a learned Italian physician and poet.

[3] See the essay on Johnson, page 60, note.

[4] Lines in a lyric strophe invented by Alcæus, the Greek poet. Perhaps the best of Gray's alcaics is the fragment beginning "O lachrymarum fons."

[5] That is, poems written in a succession of distichs consisting of a dactylic hexameter followed by a dactylic pentameter. The measure gets its name from having been early used in poems of lament.

[6] (1695?–1747.) An usher in Westminster School, who wrote entirely in Latin verse of excellent quality. Cowper, his pupil, has translated many of his verses.

[7] In his *Life of Addison*, to which several references are made.

says: "Ne croyez pas pourtant que je veuille par là blâmer les vers Latins que vous m'avez envoyés d'un de vos illustres académiciens. Je les ai trouvés fort beaux, et dignes de Vida et de Sannazar, mais non pas d'Horace et de Virgile."[1] Several poems in modern Latin have been praised by Boileau quite as liberally as it was his habit to praise anything. He says, for example, of the Père Fraguier's[2] epigrams, that Catullus seems to have come to life again. But the best proof that Boileau did not feel the undiscerning contempt for modern Latin verses which has been imputed to him is, that he wrote and published Latin verses in several metres. Indeed, it happens, curiously enough, that the most severe censure ever pronounced by him on modern Latin is conveyed in Latin hexameters. We allude to the fragment which begins: —

> "Quid numeris iterum me balbutire Latinis,
> Longe Alpes citra natum de patre Sicambro,
> Musa, jubes ?"[3]

For these reasons we feel assured that the praise which Boileau bestowed on the "Machinæ Gesticu-

[1] "Don't think, however, that I want by that to blame the Latin verses of one of your illustrious Academicians that you have sent me. I have found them very beautiful and worthy of Vida and of Sannazaro, but not of Horace and of Virgil." From letter to Brossette, October 6, 1701. Marco Girolamo Vida (1489 ?–1566) and Giacopo Sannazaro (1458–1530) were Italian poets noted for their Latin verses. Vida's best known work is his *Art of Poetry*; Sannazaro's is his *Arcadia* (not in Latin).

[2] Claude François Fraguier (1666–1728), a French Jesuit, who wrote good Latin verses.

[3] "Why, Muse, do you bid me, born of a Sicambrian father a long way this side of the Alps, to stammer again in Latin numbers?" The opening lines of a fragmentary *Satira*.

lantes" and the "Gerano-Pygmæomachia" [1] was sincere. He certainly opened himself to Addison with a freedom which was a sure indication of esteem. Literature was the chief subject of conversation. The old man talked on his favorite theme much and well, indeed, as his young hearer thought, incomparably well. Boileau had undoubtedly some of the qualities of a great critic. He wanted imagination, but he had strong sense. His literary code was formed on narrow principles, but in applying it he showed great judgment and penetration. In mere style, abstracted from the ideas of which style is the garb, his taste is excellent. He was well acquainted with the great Greek writers; and, though unable fully to appreciate their creative genius, admired the majestic simplicity of their manner, and had learned from them to despise bombast and tinsel. It is easy, we think, to discover in "The Spectator" and "The Guardian" traces of the influence, in part salutary and in part pernicious, which the mind of Boileau had on the mind of Addison.

While Addison was at Paris, an event took place which made that capital a disagreeable residence for an Englishman and a Whig. Charles,[2] second of the name, King of Spain, died, and bequeathed his dominions to Philip, Duke of Anjou, a younger son of the Dauphin. The King of France, in direct violation of his engagements both with Great Britain and with the States General,[3] accepted the bequest on

[1] Titles of Addison's Latin poems, *A Puppet-Show* and *The Battle of the Cranes and Pygmies.*

[2] 1661–1700. He was a wretchedly incompetent monarch.

[3] Holland, or rather the representative assembly of the provinces of the Netherlands.

behalf of his grandson. The house of Bourbon was at the summit of human grandeur. England had been outwitted, and found herself in a situation at once degrading and perilous. The people of France, not presaging the calamities by which they were destined to expiate the perfidy of their sovereign, went mad with pride and delight. Every man looked as if a great estate had just been left him. "The French conversation," said Addison, "begins to grow insupportable; that which was before the vainest nation in the world is now worse than ever." Sick of the arrogant exultation of the Parisians, and probably foreseeing that the peace between France and England could not be of long duration, he set off for Italy.

In December, 1700,[1] he embarked at Marseilles. As he glided along the Ligurian[2] coast, he was delighted by the sight of myrtles and olive-trees, which retained their verdure under the winter solstice. Soon, however, he encountered one of the black storms of the Mediterranean. The captain of the ship gave up all for lost, and confessed himself to a Capuchin who happened to be on board. The English heretic, in the mean time, fortified himself against the terrors of death with devotions of a very different kind. How strong an impression this perilous voyage made on him appears from the ode, "How are

[1] Macaulay's footnote: It is strange that Addison should, in the first line of his travels, have misdated his departure from Marseilles by a whole year, and still more strange that this slip of the pen, which throws the whole narrative into inextricable confusion, should have been repeated in a succession of editions, and never detected by Tickell or by Hurd.

[2] The northwestern coast of Italy, so called from the primitive inhabitants, the *Ligures*.

thy servants blest, O Lord!" which was long after published in "The Spectator." After some days of discomfort and danger, Addison was glad to land at Savona,[1] and to make his way, over mountains where no road had yet been hewn out by art, to the city of Genoa.

At Genoa, still ruled by her own doge and by the nobles whose names were inscribed on her Book of Gold,[2] Addison made a short stay. He admired the narrow streets overhung by long lines of towering palaces, the walls rich with frescoes, the gorgeous temple of the Annunciation, and the tapestries whereon were recorded the long glories of the house of Doria.[3] Thence he hastened to Milan, where he contemplated the Gothic magnificence of the cathedral with more wonder than pleasure. He passed Lake Benacus[4] while a gale was blowing, and saw the waves raging as they raged when Virgil looked upon them. At Venice, then the gayest city in Europe, the traveler spent the Carnival, the gayest season of the year, in the midst of masques, dances, and serenades. Here he was at once diverted and provoked by the absurd dramatic pieces which then disgraced the Italian stage. To one of those pieces, however, he was indebted for a valuable hint. He was present when a ridiculous play on the death of Cato was performed. Cato, it seems, was in love with the daughter of Scipio. The lady had given her heart to Cæsar. The rejected lover determined to destroy himself.

[1] On the coast about twenty-five miles west from Genoa.

[2] This register of nobility is usually connected with Venice.

[3] Doria, the celebrated family of Genoa, of whom the chief representative was Andrea, the great admiral (1466–1560).

[4] Now Lago di Garda, the largest of the Italian lakes.

He appeared seated in his library, a dagger in his hand, a Plutarch and a Tasso before him; and in this position he pronounced a soliloquy before he struck the blow. We are surprised that so remarkable a circumstance as this should have escaped the notice of all Addison's biographers. There cannot, we conceive, be the smallest doubt that this scene, in spite of its absurdities and anachronisms, struck the traveler's imagination, and suggested to him the thought of bringing "Cato" on the English stage. It is well known that about this time he began his tragedy, and that he finished the first four acts before he returned to England.

On his way from Venice to Rome, he was drawn some miles out of the beaten road by a wish to see the smallest independent state in Europe. On a rock where the snow still lay, though the Italian spring was now far advanced, was perched the little fortress of San Marino.[1] The roads which led to the secluded town were so bad that few travelers had ever visited it, and none had ever published an account of it. Addison could not suppress a good-natured smile at the simple manners and institutions of this singular community; but he observed, with the exultation of a Whig, that the rude mountain tract which formed the territory of the republic swarmed with an honest, healthy, and contented peasantry, while the rich plain which surrounded the metropolis of civil and spiritual tyranny was scarcely less desolate than the uncleared wilds of America.

At Rome, Addison remained on his first visit only long enough to catch a glimpse of St. Peter's and of

[1] Still a tiny republic covering only thirty-three miles square.

the Pantheon. His haste is the more extraordinary because the Holy Week was close at hand. He has given no hint which can enable us to pronounce why he chose to fly from a spectacle which every year allures from distant regions persons of far less taste and sensibility than his. Possibly, traveling, as he did, at the charge of a government distinguished by its enmity to the Church of Rome, he may have thought that it would be imprudent in him to assist at the most magnificent rite of that church. Many eyes would be upon him, and he might find it difficult to behave in such a manner as to give offense neither to his patrons in England nor to those among whom he resided. Whatever his motives may have been, he turned his back on the most august and affecting ceremony which is known among men, and posted along the Appian Way[1] to Naples.

Naples was then destitute of what are now, perhaps, its chief attractions. The lovely bay and the awful mountain were indeed there; but a farmhouse stood on the theatre of Herculaneum, and rows of vines grew over the streets of Pompeii.[2] The temples of Pæstum[3] had not, indeed, been hidden from the eye of man by any great convulsion of nature; but, strange to say, their existence was a secret even to artists and antiquaries. Though situated within a

[1] The oldest and best known of the Roman roads, named after its constructor, Appius Claudius, the great orator and statesman (died after 280 B. C.).

[2] See Bulwer's famous novel, *The Last Days of Pompeii.* Herculaneum was discovered by accident in 1713, Pompeii in 1750. The work of excavation is still going on.

[3] Pæstum, originally the Greek Posidonia; it was sacked in the first and eleventh centuries, A. D., and deserted in the sixteenth.

few hours' journey of a great capital, where Salvator[1] had not long before painted, and where Vico[2] was then lecturing, those noble remains were as little known to Europe as the ruined cities overgrown by the forests of Yucatan. What was to be seen at Naples, Addison saw. He climbed Vesuvius, explored the tunnel of Posilipo,[3] and wandered among the vines and almond-trees of Capreæ.[4] But neither the wonders of nature nor those of art could so occupy his attention as to prevent him from noticing, though cursorily, the abuses of the government and the misery of the people. The great kingdom which had just descended to Philip V.[5] was in a state of paralytic dotage. Even Castile and Aragon were sunk in wretchedness. Yet, compared with the Italian dependencies of the Spanish Crown, Castile and Aragon might be called prosperous. It is clear that all the observations which Addison made in Italy tended to confirm him in the political opinions which he had adopted at home. To the last he always spoke of foreign travel as the best cure for Jacobitism. In his "Freeholder"[6] the Tory fox-hunter asks what travel-

[1] Salvator Rosa (1615–1673), a famous Italian landscape and portrait painter.

[2] Giovanni Battista Vico (1668–1744?), a noted Neapolitan jurist and pioneer in philosophic history.

[3] Posilipo (Lat. Pausilypum) is a promontory between Naples and Puteoli. The grotto, which is well described by Addison, was supposed to have been made by Virgil in his capacity of magician.

[4] Capreæ (Capri), an island, noted for its beautiful scenery, on the north side of the Bay of Naples.

[5] Louis XIV.'s grandson (1683–1746), over whom the War of the Spanish Succession was fought, and who was finally left on the throne of Spain. Naples at this time belonged to Spain.

[6] *The Freeholder* was a weekly political sheet published by

ing is good for, except to teach a man to jabber French and to talk against passive obedience.

From Naples, Addison returned to Rome by sea, along the coast which his favorite Virgil had celebrated. The felucca passed the headland where the oar and trumpet were placed by the Trojan adventurers on the tomb of Misenus,[1] and anchored at night under the shelter of the fabled promontory of Circe.[2] The voyage ended in the Tiber, still overhung with dark verdure, and still turbid with yellow sand, as when it met the eyes of Æneas.[3] From the ruined port of Ostia the stranger hurried to Rome, and at Rome he remained during those hot and sickly months when, even in the Augustan age, all who could make their escape fled from mad dogs and from streets black with funerals, to gather the first figs of the season in the country. It is probable that when he, long after, poured forth in verse his gratitude to the Providence which had enabled him to breathe unhurt in tainted air, he was thinking of the August and September which he passed at Rome.

It was not till the latter end of October that he tore himself away from the masterpieces of ancient and modern art which are collected in the city so

Addison from Friday, December 23, 1715, to Friday, June 29, 1716 (fifty-five numbers), in support of the House of Hanover, then just established, and recently threatened by the uprising under the Old Pretender. The essays as a whole are not particularly interesting. That referred to by Macaulay is No. 22, and is considered one of Addison's best.

[1] See *Æneid*, vi. 162 *seq.* Misenus was a trumpeter said to have been burned on the promontory that bears his name.

[2] Monte Circeio, a promontory thought to have been once the island of the enchantress Circe.

[3] *Æneid*, vii. 1–24.

long the mistress of the world. He then journeyed northward, passed through Sienna, and for a moment forgot his prejudices in favor of classic architecture as he looked on the magnificent cathedral. At Florence he spent some days with the Duke of Shrewsbury,[1] who — cloyed with the pleasures of ambition and impatient of its pains, fearing both parties and loving neither — had determined to hide in an Italian retreat talents and accomplishments which, if they had been united with fixed principles and civil courage, might have made him the foremost man of his age. These days, we are told, passed pleasantly, and we can easily believe it; for Addison was a delightful companion when he was at his ease; and the duke, though he seldom forgot that he was a Talbot, had the invaluable art of putting at ease all who came near him.

Addison gave some time to Florence, and especially to the sculptures in the Museum, which he preferred even to those of the Vatican. He then pursued his journey through a country in which the ravages of the last war were still discernible, and in which all men were looking forward with dread to a still fiercer conflict. Eugene[2] had already descended from the Rhætian Alps to dispute with Catinat[3] the rich plain of Lombardy. The faithless ruler of Savoy[4] was still reckoned among the allies of

[1] See p. 112, note 2. Also Macaulay's *History*, chap. xxii.

[2] Prince Eugene (1663–1736), next in prowess to Marlborough among the allies in the War of the Spanish Succession.

[3] Nicolas Catinat (1637–1712), Marshal of France, a fine soldier and a noble character.

[4] Victor Amadeus II. (1666–1732), Duke of Savoy, first King of Sardinia (1720). Resigned to his son in 1730. See Browning's play, *King Victor and King Charles.*

Louis. England had not yet actually declared war against France, but Manchester[1] had left Paris, and the negotiations which produced the Grand Alliance[2] against the house of Bourbon were in progress. Under such circumstances, it was desirable for an English traveler to reach neutral ground without delay. Addison resolved to cross Mont Cenis. It was December, and the road was very different from that which now reminds the stranger of the power and genius of Napoleon. The winter, however, was mild; and the passage was, for those times, easy. To this journey Addison alluded when, in the ode which we have already quoted, he said that for him the Divine Goodness had warmed the hoary Alpine hills.[3]

It was in the midst of the eternal snow that he composed his "Epistle" to his friend Montague, now Lord Halifax. That "Epistle," once widely renowned, is now known only to curious readers, and will hardly be considered by those to whom it is known as in any perceptible degree heightening Addison's fame. It is, however, decidedly superior to any English composition which he had previously published. Nay, we think it quite as good as any poem in heroic metre which appeared during the interval between the death of Dryden and the publication of the "Essay on Criticism."[4] It contains passages as good as the second-rate passages of Pope, and would have added to the reputation of Parnell or Prior.[5]

[1] See page 114, note 1.

[2] That is, of Germany, Holland, and England against France, by treaty of September 7, 1701.

[3] "How are thy servants blest, O Lord!" See page 122.

[4] Pope published this in 1711, two years after writing it.

[5] Macaulay's praise is not high, because the years 1700–1710

But, whatever be the literary merits or defects of the "Epistle," it undoubtedly does honor to the principles and spirit of the author. Halifax had now nothing to give. He had fallen from power, had been held up to obloquy, had been impeached by the House of Commons, and, though his peers had dismissed the impeachment, had, as it seemed, little chance of ever again filling high office. The "Epistle," written at such a time, is one among many proofs that there was no mixture of cowardice or meanness in the suavity and moderation which distinguished Addison from all the other public men of those stormy times.

At Geneva the traveler learned that a partial change of ministry had taken place in England, and that the Earl of Manchester had become secretary of state. Manchester exerted himself to serve his young friend. It was thought advisable that an English agent should be near the person of Eugene in Italy; and Addison, whose diplomatic education was now finished, was the man selected. He was preparing to enter on his honorable functions when all his prospects were for a time darkened by the death of William III.[1]

Anne had long felt a strong aversion — personal, political, and religious — to the Whig party. That aversion appeared in the first measures of her reign. Manchester was deprived of the seals after he had held them only a few weeks. Neither Somers nor Halifax

were barren of good poetry. Gay had not yet published, and Ambrose Philips's pastorals were of little moment. Addison's lines might have added to Prior's contemporary reputation, but then Prior is not now celebrated for his heroic verse, but for his *vers de société*, some of which were published in 1707.

[1] March 8, 1701.

was sworn of the Privy Council. Addison shared the fate of his three patrons. His hopes of employment in the public service were at an end; his pension was stopped; and it was necessary for him to support himself by his own exertions. He became tutor to a young English traveler, and appears to have rambled with his pupil over great part of Switzerland and Germany. At this time he wrote his pleasing treatise on medals. It was not published till after his death, but several distinguished scholars saw the manuscript, and gave just praise to the grace of the style and to the learning and ingenuity evinced by the quotations.

From Germany, Addison repaired to Holland, where he learned the melancholy news of his father's death. After passing some months in the United Provinces, he returned, about the close of the year 1703, to England. He was there cordially received by his friends, and introduced by them into the Kit Cat Club, a society in which were collected all the various talents and accomplishments which then gave lustre to the Whig party.

Addison was, during some months after his return from the Continent, hard pressed by pecuniary difficulties; but it was soon in the power of his noble patrons to serve him effectually. A political change — silent and gradual, but of the highest importance — was in daily progress. The accession of Anne had been hailed by the Tories with transports of joy and hope, and for a time it seemed that the Whigs had fallen never to rise again. The throne was surrounded by men supposed to be attached to the prerogative and to the Church; and among these none stood so high in the favor of the sovereign as the

Lord Treasurer Godolphin[1] and the Captain-General Marlborough.

The country gentlemen and country clergymen had fully expected that the policy of these ministers would be directly opposed to that which had been almost constantly followed by William; that the landed interest would be favored at the expense of trade; that no addition would be made to the funded debt; that the privileges conceded to Dissenters by the late king would be curtailed, if not withdrawn; that the war with France, if there must be such a war, would, on our part, be almost entirely naval; and that the government would avoid close connections with foreign powers, and, above all, with Holland.

But the country gentlemen and country clergymen were fated to be deceived, not for the last time. The prejudices and passions which raged without control in vicarages, in cathedral closes, and in the manor houses of fox-hunting squires, were not shared by the chiefs of the ministry. Those statesmen saw that it was both for the public interest and for their own interest to adopt a Whig policy, at least as respected the alliances of the country and the conduct of the war. But, if the foreign policy of the Whigs were adopted, it was impossible to abstain from adopting, also, their financial policy. The natural consequences followed. The rigid Tories were alienated from the government. The votes of the Whigs became necessary to it. The votes of the Whigs could be secured only by further concessions, and further concessions the Queen was induced to make.

[1] Sidney, Earl of Godolphin (1635–1712), Queen Anne's Lord Treasurer, noted for his sagacity and administrative capacity.

At the beginning of the year 1704, the state of parties bore a close analogy to the state of parties in 1826. In 1826, as in 1704, there was a Tory ministry divided into two hostile sections. The position of Mr. Canning[1] and his friends in 1826 corresponded to that which Marlborough and Godolphin occupied in 1704. Nottingham and Jersey[2] were, in 1704, what Lord Eldon and Lord Westmoreland[3] were in 1826. The Whigs of 1704 were in a situation resembling that in which the Whigs of 1826 stood. In 1704 Somers, Halifax, Sunderland,[4] Cowper,[5] were not in office. There was no avowed coalition between them and the moderate Tories. It is probable that no direct communication tending to such a coalition had yet taken place; yet all men saw that such a coalition was inevitable, nay, that it was already half formed. Such, or nearly such, was the state of things when tidings arrived of the great battle fought at Blenheim on the 13th of August, 1704. By the Whigs the news was

[1] George Canning (1770–1827), a statesman and orator prominent during and after the wars with Napoleon. He favored Catholic emancipation, freer trade, etc., and was opposed by the Duke of Wellington, Lord Eldon, and Mr. (afterwards Sir Robert) Peel.

[2] Daniel Finch, second Earl of Nottingham (1647–1730), Secretary of State under William III. and Anne; and Edward Villiers, Earl of Jersey (1656–1711), Secretary of State, and prominent diplomat.

[3] John Scott, Earl of Eldon (1751–1838), the great Lord Chancellor; John Fane, Earl of Westmoreland (1759–1841), who held the office of Lord Privy Seal for many years.

[4] Charles Spencer, third Earl of Sunderland (1674–1722), Marlborough's son-in-law and a prominent politician.

[5] William, Earl Cowper (1664–1723), Lord Chancellor in 1707.

hailed with transports of joy and pride. No fault, no cause of quarrel, could be remembered by them against the commander whose genius had in one day changed the face of Europe, saved the imperial throne,[1] humbled the house of Bourbon, and secured the Act of Settlement[2] against foreign hostility. The feeling of the Tories was very different. They could not, indeed, without imprudence, openly express regret at an event so glorious to their country; but their congratulations were so cold and sullen as to give deep disgust to the victorious general and his friends.

Godolphin was not a reading man. Whatever time he could spare from business he was in the habit of spending at Newmarket[3] or at the card table. But he was not absolutely indifferent to poetry, and he was too intelligent an observer not to perceive that literature was a formidable engine of political warfare, and that the great Whig leaders had strengthened their party, and raised their character, by extending a liberal and judicious patronage to good writers. He was mortified, and not without reason, by the exceeding badness of the poems which appeared in honor of the battle of Blenheim. One of these poems has been rescued from oblivion by the exquisite absurdity of three lines: —

[1] That is, of the Holy Roman Empire, occupied by the House of Hapsburg, represented by Joseph I.

[2] The great Act of 1701, fixing the succession of the Throne, in default of heirs to William and Anne, in Sophia, Electress of Hanover, and her heirs. Sophia was the granddaughter of James I.

[3] A racing centre noted from the time of James I. See Macaulay's *History* (index).

"Think of two thousand gentlemen at least,
And each man mounted on his capering beast;
Into the Danube they were pushed by shoals." [1]

Where to procure better verses the treasurer did not know. He understood how to negotiate a loan or remit a subsidy; he was also well versed in the history of running-horses and fighting-cocks; but his acquaintance among the poets was very small. He consulted Halifax, but Halifax affected to decline the office of adviser. He had, he said, done his best, when he had power, to encourage men whose abilities and acquirements might do honor to their country. Those times were over. Other maxims had prevailed. Merit was suffered to pine in obscurity, and the public money was squandered on the undeserving. "I do know," he added, "a gentleman who would celebrate the battle in a manner worthy of the subject, but I will not name him." Godolphin, who was expert at the soft answer which turneth away wrath, and who was under the necessity of paying court to the Whigs, gently replied that there was too much ground for Halifax's complaints, but that what was amiss should in time be rectified, and that in the mean time the services of a man such as Halifax had described should be liberally rewarded. Halifax then mentioned Addison, but, mindful of the dignity, as well as of the pecuniary interest, of his friend, insisted that the minister should apply in the most courteous manner to Addison himself, and this Godolphin promised to do.

Addison then occupied a garret up three pair of

[1] This quotation has escaped the search of the editor, and of several scholars, and, what is more curious, escaped the commentators on *Martinus Scriblerus*.

stairs, over a small shop in the Haymarket. In this humble lodging he was surprised, on the morning which followed the conversation between Godolphin and Halifax, by a visit from no less a person than the Right Hon. Henry Boyle, then chancellor of the exchequer, and afterwards Lord Carleton.[1] This high-born minister had been sent by the lord treasurer as ambassador to the needy poet. Addison readily undertook the proposed task, — a task which, to so good a Whig, was probably a pleasure. When the poem was little more than half finished, he showed it to Godolphin, who was delighted with it, and particularly with the famous similitude of the angel.[2] Addison was instantly appointed to a commissionership[3] worth about two hundred pounds a year, and was assured that this appointment was only an earnest of greater favors.

"The Campaign" came forth, and was as much admired by the public as by the minister. It pleases us less, on the whole, than the "Epistle" to Halifax; yet it undoubtedly ranks high among the poems which appeared during the interval between the death of Dryden and the dawn of Pope's genius. The chief merit of "The Campaign," we think, is that which was noticed by Johnson, — the manly and rational

[1] Also Secretary of State under Anne. The third volume of *The Spectator* was dedicated to him. He died in 1725.

[2] "So when an angel by divine command
With rising tempests shakes a guilty land,
Such as of late o'er pale Britannia past,
Calm and serene he drives the furious blast,
And, pleas'd th' Almighty's orders to perform,
Rides in the whirlwind and directs the storm."

[3] Of appeals. He succeeded the great philosopher John Locke.

rejection of fiction. The first great poet whose works have come down to us sang of war long before war became a science or a trade. If, in his time, there was enmity between two little Greek towns, each poured forth its crowd of citizens, ignorant of discipline, and armed with implements of labor rudely turned into weapons. On each side appeared conspicuous a few chiefs, whose wealth had enabled them to procure good armor, horses, and chariots, and whose leisure had enabled them to practice military exercises. One such chief — if he were a man of great strength, agility, and courage — would probably be more formidable than twenty common men; and the force and dexterity with which he flung his spear might have no inconsiderable share in deciding the event of the day. Such were probably the battles with which Homer was familiar. But Homer related the actions of men of a former generation; of men who sprang from the gods, and communed with the gods face to face; of men, one of whom could with ease hurl rocks which two sturdy hinds of a later period would be unable even to lift. He therefore naturally represented their martial exploits as resembling in kind, but far surpassing in magnitude, those of the stoutest and most expert combatants of his own age. Achilles clad in celestial armor, drawn by celestial coursers, grasping the spear which none but himself could raise, driving all Troy and Lycia before him, and choking Scamander with dead, was only a magnificent exaggeration of the real hero, who, strong, fearless, accustomed to the use of weapons, guarded by a shield and helmet of the best Sidonian fabric, and whirled along by horses of Thessalian breed, struck down with his own right arm foe after foe.

In all rude societies similar notions are found. There are at this day countries where the Lifeguardsman Shaw [1] would be considered as a much greater warrior than the Duke of Wellington. Bonaparte loved to describe the astonishment with which the Mamelukes [2] looked at his diminutive figure. Mourad Bey,[3] distinguished above all his fellows by his bodily strength, and by the skill with which he managed his horse and his sabre, could not believe that a man who was scarcely five feet high, and rode like a butcher, could be the greatest soldier in Europe.

Homer's descriptions of war had, therefore, as much truth as poetry requires. But truth was altogether wanting to the performances of those who, writing about battles which had scarcely anything in common with the battles of his times, servilely imitated his manner. The folly of Silius Italicus,[4] in particular, is positively nauseous. He undertook to record in verse the vicissitudes of a great struggle between generals of the first order; and his narrative is made up of the hideous wounds which these generals inflicted with their own hands. Asdrubal flings

[1] "Jack" Shaw (1789–1815). A famous pugilist who afterwards won further distinction by his bravery at the battle of Waterloo. He killed ten French cuirassiers before falling himself.

[2] The Mamelukes were a powerful body of soldiers, originally slaves, who ruled Egypt through a sultan of their choosing from 1254 to 1517, when their kingdom was overthrown by Selim I. Mameluke beys were left in command, however, and from 1750 to 1811 the power of Turkey was merely nominal. In the latter year they were massacred by Mohammed Ali.

[3] A Mameluke chieftain who resisted Napoleon. Died in 1801.

[4] See page 101, note 2.

a spear which grazes the shoulder of the consul Nero, but Nero sends his spear into Asdrubal's side. Fabius slays Thuris and Butes, and Maris and Arses, and the long-haired Adherbes, and the gigantic Thylis, and Sapharus and Monæsus, and the trumpeter Morinus. Hannibal runs Perusinus through the groin with a stake, and breaks the backbone of Telesinus with a huge stone.[1] This detestable fashion was copied in modern times, and continued to prevail down to the age of Addison. Several versifiers had described William turning thousands to flight by his single prowess, and dyeing the Boyne with Irish blood. Nay, so estimable a writer as John Philips,[2] the author of "The Splendid Shilling," represented Marlborough as having won the battle of Blenheim merely by strength of muscle and skill in fence. The following lines may serve as an example: —

> "Churchill, viewing where
> The violence of Tallard[3] most prevailed,
> Came to oppose his slaughtering arm. With speed
> Precipitate he rode, urging his way
> O'er hills of gasping heroes, and fallen steeds
> Rolling in death. Destruction, grim with blood,
> Attends his furious course. Around his head
> The glowing balls play innocent, while he
> With dire impetuous sway deals fatal blows
> Among the flying Gauls. In Gallic blood
> He dyes his reeking sword, and strews the ground
> With headless ranks. What can they do? Or how
> Withstand his wide destroying sword?"

[1] All these incidents are taken from Silius's poem on the Punic War.

[2] (1676–1708.) His poem named was a humorous imitation of Miltonic blank-verse. The verses on Blenheim can be found in Chalmers's collection.

[3] Camille de Tallard (1652–1728), the French marshal who commanded at Blenheim.

Addison, with excellent sense and taste, departed from this ridiculous fashion. He reserved his praise for the qualities which made Marlborough truly great, — energy, sagacity, military science; but, above all, the poet extolled the firmness of that mind which, in the midst of confusion, uproar, and slaughter, examined and disposed everything with the serene wisdom of a higher intelligence.

Here it was that he introduced the famous comparison of Marlborough to an angel guiding the whirlwind. We will not dispute the general justice of Johnson's remarks on this passage. But we must point out one circumstance which appears to have escaped all the critics. The extraordinary effect which this simile produced when it first appeared, and which to the following generation seemed inexplicable, is doubtless to be chiefly attributed to a line which most readers now regard as a feeble parenthesis: —

"Such as, of late, o'er pale Britannia pass'd."

Addison spoke, not of a storm, but of the storm. The great tempest of November, 1703,[1] — the only tempest which in our latitude has equaled the rage of a tropical hurricane, — had left a dreadful recollection in the minds of all men. No other tempest was ever, in this country, the occasion of a parliamentary address or of a public fast. Whole fleets had been cast away. Large mansions had been blown down. One prelate had been buried beneath the ruins of his palace.[2] London and Bristol had presented the appearance of cities just sacked. Hundreds of families were still in mourning. The prostrate trunks of large

[1] Nov. 26–Dec. 1.

[2] The Bishop of Bath and Wells, Richard Kidder (born 1633).

trees, and the ruins of houses, still attested, in all the southern counties, the fury of the blast. The popularity which the simile of the angel enjoyed among Addison's contemporaries has always seemed to us to be a remarkable instance of the advantage which, in rhetoric and poetry, the particular has over the general.[1]

Soon after "The Campaign," was published Addison's narrative of his travels in Italy. The first effect produced by this narrative was disappointment. The crowd of readers, who expected politics and scandal, speculations on the projects of Victor Amadeus,[2] and anecdotes about the jollities of convents and the amours of cardinals and nuns, were confounded by finding that the writer's mind was much more occupied by the war between the Trojans and Rutulians[3] than by the war between France and Austria; and that he seemed to have heard no scandal of later date than the gallantries of the Empress Faustina.[4] In time, however, the judgment of the many was overruled by that of the few; and before the book was reprinted it was so eagerly sought that it sold for five times the original price. It is still read with pleasure. The style is pure and flowing; the classical quotations and allusions are numerous and happy; and we are now and then charmed by that singularly humane and

[1] See in the essay on Milton the comparison of Milton and Dante.

[2] See page 128, note 4.

[3] An aboriginal people who under Turnus disputed Italy with the Trojans under Æneas. See the *Æneid*.

[4] Faustina may refer either to the wife of the Emperor Antoninus Pius or to her daughter, the wife of Marcus Aurelius; both were accused of shameless profligacy, with how much truth it is hard to determine.

delicate humor in which Addison excelled all men. Yet this agreeable work, even when considered merely as the history of a literary tour, may justly be censured on account of its faults of omission. We have already said that, though rich in extracts from the Latin poets, it contains scarcely any references to the Latin orators and historians. We must add that it contains little, or rather no information respecting the history and literature of modern Italy. To the best of our remembrance, Addison does not mention Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, Boiardo, Berni, Lorenzo de' Medici, or Machiavelli.[1] He coldly tells us that at Ferrara he saw the tomb of Ariosto, and that at Venice he heard the gondoliers sing verses of Tasso. But for Tasso and Ariosto he cared far less than for Valerius Flaccus and Sidonius Apollinaris.[2] The gentle flow of the Ticin[3] brings a line of Silius[4] to

[1] Macaulay here gives a list of the chief writers of Italy between the time of the author of the *Divine Comedy* (1265–1321) and the age of the Medici at Florence. Petrarch (1304–1374) and Boccaccio (1313–1375) are well known. Count Boiardo (1434–1492) wrote the *Orlando Innamorato*, and Francesco Berni (born about 1490) remodeled this poem and wrote sonnets and Latin verses in a style greatly admired. Lorenzo the Magnificent (1448–1492) was the most illustrious of his family, and was a poet as well as a statesman; Nicolo Machiavelli (1469–1527) was a great historian and publicist whose name is associated, perhaps unjustly, with unprincipled statesmanship. For all these see at least Hallman and Sismondi, and read Macaulay's essays on Milton and Machiavelli, Dante, and Petrarch.

[2] Obscure Roman poets; the first wrote an unfinished poem on the Argonauts about the time of Vespasian (first century, A. D.), the second was a Christian writer of the fifth century who left some letters and panegyrical poems.

[3] The Ticino (Ticinus), a river of Northern Italy famous for one of Hannibal's battles.

[4] See page 101, note 2.

his mind. The sulphurous steam of Albula suggests to him several passages of Martial.[1] But he has not a word to say of the illustrious dead of Santa Croce;[2] he crosses the wood of Ravenna without recollecting the Spectre Huntsman,[3] and wanders up and down Rimini without one thought of Francesca.[4] At Paris he had eagerly sought an introduction to Boileau; but he seems not to have been at all aware that at Florence he was in the vicinity of a poet with whom Boileau could not sustain a comparison, — of the greatest lyric poet of modern times, Vincenzio Filicaja.[5] This is the more remarkable because Filicaja was the favorite poet of the accomplished Somers, under whose protection Addison traveled, and to whom the account of the travels is dedicated. The truth is, that Addison knew little, and cared less, about the literature of modern Italy. His favorite models were Latin. His favorite critics were French. Half the Tuscan poetry that he had read seemed to him monstrous, and the other half tawdry.

His travels were followed by the lively opera of "Rosamond." This piece was ill set to music, and therefore failed on the stage; but it completely succeeded in print, and is indeed excellent in its kind. The smoothness with which the verses glide, and the elasticity with which they bound, is, to our ears at

[1] Marcus Valerius Martialis (died about A. D. 104, at the age of seventy-five), the famous epigrammatist.

[2] The Westminster Abbey of Florence.

[3] See Boccaccio's *Decameron*, Day 5, Nov. 8. The huntsman was a knight who had killed himself for love of a cruel lady, whom afterwards he pursued with hounds.

[4] See Dante's *Inferno* (end of canto v.) for the episode of Francesca da Rimini, one of the most pathetic in all literature.

[5] See the essay on Milton, page 43, text and note 3.

least, very pleasing. We are inclined to think that if Addison had left heroic couplets to Pope and blank verse to Rowe,[1] and had employed himself in writing airy and spirited songs, his reputation as a poet would have stood far higher than it now does. Some years after his death, "Rosamond" was set to new music by Dr. Arne,[2] and was performed with complete success. Several passages long retained their popularity, and were daily sung, during the latter part of the reign of George II., at all the harpsichords in England.[3]

While Addison thus amused himself, his prospects and the prospects of his party were constantly becoming brighter and brighter. In the spring of 1705, the ministers were freed from the restraint imposed by a House of Commons in which Tories of the most perverse class had the ascendency. The elections were favorable to the Whigs. The coalition which had been tacitly and gradually formed was now openly avowed. The Great Seal[4] was given to Cowper. Somers and Halifax were sworn of the Council. Halifax was sent in the following year to carry the deco-

[1] Nicholas Rowe (1674–1718), a dramatist now little read, and an early editor of Shakespeare.

[2] Dr. Thomas Augustine Arne (1710–1778). He wrote the music to *Rosamond* when he was only eighteen. He also furnished music for *Comus*.

[3] Mr. Gosse calls *Rosamond* a "graceful" opera, but proceeds to remark that "Addison was totally without lyric gift." The latter judgment, however difficult to square with the former, is undoubtedly correct, and should be received in place of Macaulay's praise, which was due rather to his love for Addison than to his better critical faculty.

[4] The great seal is attached to important documents of state and is kept by the Lord Chancellor, or by the Lord Keeper during a vacancy in the chancellorship.

rations of the order of the garter to the Electoral Prince of Hanover,[1] and was accompanied on this honorable mission by Addison, who had just been made undersecretary of state. The secretary of state under whom Addison first served was Sir Charles Hedges,[2] a Tory; but Hedges was soon dismissed to make room for the most vehement of Whigs, Charles, Earl of Sunderland. In every department of the state, indeed, the High Churchmen were compelled to give place to their opponents. At the close of 1707, the Tories who still remained in office strove to rally, with Harley[3] at their head; but the attempt, though favored by the Queen, — who had always been a Tory at heart, and who had now quarreled with the Duchess of Marlborough,[4] — was unsuccessful. The time was not yet. The captain-general was at the height of popularity and glory. The Low Church party had a majority in Parliament. The country squires and rectors, though occasionally uttering a savage growl, were for the most part in a state of torpor, which lasted till they were roused into activity, and indeed into madness, by the prosecution of Sacheverell.[5] Harley and his adherents were compelled to retire. The victory of the Whigs was complete. At the general election of 1708, their strength in the House of Commons became irresistible; and

[1] Afterwards George I.

[2] Died 1714.

[3] Robert Harley (1661–1724), Earl of Oxford. See the essay on Johnson, page 15, note 1.

[4] The notorious Sarah Jennings (1660–1744), whose control over her husband, and, for a time, the queen, is familiar to all students of the period.

[5] See the essay on Johnson, page 16, note 4. The famous Tory preacher had been a college-mate of Addison's.

before the end of that year Somers was made lord president of the Council, and Wharton[1] lord lieutenant of Ireland.

Addison sat for Malmesbury[2] in the House of Commons which was elected in 1708, but the House of Commons was not the field for him. The bashfulness of his nature made his wit and eloquence useless in debate. He once rose, but could not overcome his diffidence, and ever after remained silent. Nobody can think it strange that a great writer should fail as a speaker; but many probably will think it strange that Addison's failure as a speaker should have had no unfavorable effect on his success as a politician. In our time, a man of high rank and great fortune might, though speaking very little and very ill, hold a considerable post; but it would now be inconceivable that a mere adventurer — a man who, when out of office, must live by his pen — should in a few years become successively undersecretary of state, chief secretary for Ireland, and secretary of state, without some oratorical talent. Addison, without high birth and with little property, rose to a post which dukes, the heads of the great houses of Talbot, Russell, and Bentinck,[3] have thought it an honor to fill. Without opening his lips in debate, he rose to a post the highest that Chatham or Fox ever reached; and this he did before he had been nine years in Parliament. We must look for the explanation of this seeming miracle to the peculiar

[1] Thomas, Marquis of Wharton (1640–1715), one of the ablest Whigs.

[2] A market town of Wilts, in which county he had been born.

[3] The family names of the Dukes of Shrewsbury, Bedford, and Portland.

circumstances in which that generation was placed. During the interval which elapsed between the time when the censorship of the press ceased, and the time when parliamentary proceedings began to be freely reported, literary talents were, to a public man, of much more importance, and oratorical talents of much less importance, than in our time. At present, the best way of giving rapid and wide publicity to a fact or an argument is to introduce that fact or argument into a speech made in Parliament. If a political tract were to appear superior to "The Conduct of the Allies,"[1] or to the best numbers of "The Freeholder," the circulation of such a tract would be languid indeed, when compared with the circulation of every remarkable word uttered in the deliberations of the Legislature. A speech made in the House of Commons at four in the morning is on thirty thousand tables before ten. A speech made on the Monday is read on the Wednesday by multitudes in Antrim and Aberdeenshire.[2] The orator, by the help of the shorthand writer, has to a great extent superseded the pamphleteer. It was not so in the reign of Anne. The best speech could then produce no effect except on those who heard it. It was only by means of the press that the opinion of the public without doors could be influenced; and the opinion of the public without doors could not but be of the highest importance in a country governed by parliaments, and indeed at that time governed by triennial parliaments. The pen was therefore a more formidable

[1] By Dean Swift (1711).

[2] Counties in northern Ireland and Scotland; *i. e.*, to the farthest parts of the empire. Note how fond Macaulay is of the concrete rather than the general statement.

political engine than the tongue. Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox contended only in Parliament. But Walpole and Pulteney,[1] the Pitt and Fox of an earlier period, had not done half of what was necessary when they sat down amidst the acclamations of the House of Commons. They had still to plead their cause before the country, and this they could do only by means of the press. Their works are now forgotten; but it is certain that there were in Grub Street[2] few more assiduous scribblers of Thoughts, Letters, Answers, Remarks, than these two great chiefs of parties. Pulteney, when leader of the Opposition, and possessed of thirty thousand a year, edited "The Craftsman."[3] Walpole, though not a man of literary habits, was the author of at least ten pamphlets, and retouched and corrected many more. These facts sufficiently show of how great importance literary assistance then was to the contending parties. St. John[4] was certainly, in Anne's reign, the best Tory speaker; Cowper was probably the best Whig speaker: but it may well be doubted whether St. John did so much for the Tories as Swift, and whether Cowper did so much for the Whigs as Addison. When these things are duly considered, it will not be thought strange that Addison should have climbed higher in

[1] See the essay on Milton, page 11, note 3, and the essay on Johnson, page 16, note 1.

[2] See the essay on Johnson, page 22, note 1.

[3] This paper, which embarrassed Walpole, began on December 5, 1726, and ran for a considerable time, filling fourteen volumes in its collected form.

[4] Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke (1678–1751), one of the most noted and least trustworthy politicians of the time, also a writer of once great but now much diminished repute. Pope inscribed to him the *Essay on Man*.

the state than any other Englishman has ever, by means merely of literary talents, been able to climb. Swift would in all probability have climbed as high if he had not been encumbered by his cassock and his pudding sleeves.[1] As far as the homage of the great went, Swift had as much of it as if he had been lord treasurer.

To the influence which Addison derived from his literary talents was added all the influence which arises from character. The world, always ready to think the worst of needy political adventurers, was forced to make one exception. Restlessness, violence, audacity, laxity of principle, are the vices ordinarily attributed to that class of men. But faction itself could not deny that Addison had, through all changes of fortune, been strictly faithful to his early opinions and to his early friends; that his integrity was without stain; that his whole deportment indicated a fine sense of the becoming; that, in the utmost heat of controversy, his zeal was tempered by a regard for truth, humanity, and social decorum; that no outrage could ever provoke him to retaliation unworthy of a Christian and a gentleman; and that his only faults were a too sensitive delicacy and a modesty which amounted to bashfulness.

He was undoubtedly one of the most popular men of his time; and much of his popularity he owed, we believe, to that very timidity which his friends lamented. That timidity often prevented him from exhibiting his talents to the best advantage, but it propitiated Nemesis. It averted that envy which would otherwise have been excited by fame so splen-

[1] "Pudding sleeves" refers to the full sleeves of the black gowns worn by the clergy.

did, and by so rapid an elevation. No man is so great a favorite with the public as he who is at once an object of admiration, of respect, and of pity; and such were the feelings which Addison inspired. Those who enjoyed the privilege of hearing his familiar conversation declared with one voice that it was superior even to his writings. The brilliant Mary Montagu[1] said that she had known all the wits, and that Addison was the best company in the world. The malignant Pope was forced to own that there was a charm in Addison's talk which could be found nowhere else. Swift, when burning with animosity against the Whigs, could not but confess to Stella[2] that, after all, he had never known any associate so agreeable as Addison. Steele, an excellent judge of lively conversation, said that the conversation of Addison was at once the most polite and the most mirthful that could be imagined; that it was Terence and Catullus in one, heightened by an exquisite something which was neither Terence nor Catullus, but Addison alone. Young, an excellent judge of serious conversation, said that when Addison was at his ease he went on in a noble strain of thought and language, so as to chain the attention of every hearer. Nor were Addison's great colloquial powers more admirable than the courtesy and softness of heart which appeared in his conversation. At the same time, it would be too much to say that he was wholly devoid of the malice which is, perhaps, inseparable from a keen sense of the ludicrous. He had one

[1] See page 201; also the essay on Johnson, page 31, note 2.

[2] Swift's name for Miss Esther Johnson (1681–1728), with whom he corresponded for a long while and whom he finally married.

habit which both Swift and Stella applauded, and which we hardly know how to blame. If his first attempts to set a presuming dunce right were ill received, he changed his tone, "assented with civil leer,"[1] and lured the flattered coxcomb deeper and deeper into absurdity. That such was his practice we should, we think, have guessed from his works. "The Tatler's" criticisms on Mr. Softly's sonnet, and "The Spectator's" dialogue with the politician who is so zealous for the honor of Lady Q—p—t—s, are excellent specimens of this innocent mischief.

Such were Addison's talents for conversation. But his rare gifts were not exhibited to crowds or to strangers. As soon as he entered a large company, as soon as he saw an unknown face, his lips were sealed, and his manners became constrained. None who met him only in great assemblies would have been able to believe that he was the same man who had often kept a few friends listening and laughing round a table from the time when the play ended till the clock of St. Paul's in Covent Garden struck four. Yet, even at such a table, he was not seen to the best advantage. To enjoy his conversation in the highest perfection, it was necessary to be alone with him, and to hear him, in his own phrase, think aloud. "There is no such thing," he used to say, "as real conversation but between two persons."

This timidity — a timidity surely neither ungraceful nor unamiable — led Addison into the two most serious faults which can with justice be imputed to him. He found that wine broke the spell which lay on his fine intellect, and was therefore too easily seduced into convivial excess. Such excess was in that

[1] From Pope's lines on Addison quoted later.

age regarded, even by grave men, as the most venial of all peccadillos, and was so far from being a mark of ill-breeding that it was almost essential to the character of a fine gentleman. But the smallest speck is seen on a white ground, and almost all the biographers of Addison have said something about this failing. Of any other statesman or writer of Queen Anne's reign, we should no more think of saying that he sometimes took too much wine than that he wore a long wig and a sword.

To the excessive modesty of Addison's nature we must ascribe another fault, which generally arises from a very different cause. He became a little too fond of seeing himself surrounded by a small circle of admirers to whom he was as a king, or rather as a god. All these men were far inferior to him in ability, and some of them had very serious faults. Nor did those faults escape his observation; for, if ever there was an eye which saw through and through men, it was the eye of Addison. But, with the keenest observation and the finest sense of the ridiculous, he had a large charity. The feeling with which he looked on most of his humble companions was one of benevolence, slightly tinctured with contempt. He was at perfect ease in their company; he was grateful for their devoted attachment; and he loaded them with benefits. Their veneration for him appears to have exceeded that with which Johnson was regarded by Boswell,[1] or Warburton by Hurd.[2] It was not in

[1] James Boswell (1740–1795). See Macaulay's essays on Johnson and on Boswell's Life of Johnson.

[2] Richard Hurd (1720–1808) was a friend and disciple of Warburton (see the essay on Johnson, page 22, note 3), who was something of a scholar, became Bishop of Worcester, and declined to be Archbishop of Canterbury. He edited Addison.

the power of adulation to turn such a head, or deprave such a heart, as Addison's; but it must in candor be admitted that he contracted some of the faults which can scarcely be avoided by any person who is so unfortunate as to be the oracle of a small literary coterie.

One member of this little society was Eustace Budgell,[1] a young templar of some literature,[2] and a distant relation of Addison. There was at this time no stain on the character of Budgell; and it is not improbable that his career would have been prosperous and honorable if the life of his cousin had been prolonged. But when the master was laid in the grave, the disciple broke loose from all restraint, descended rapidly from one degree of vice and misery to another, ruined his fortune by follies, attempted to repair it by crimes, and at length closed a wicked and unhappy life by self-murder. Yet, to the last, the wretched man — gambler, lampooner, cheat, forger, as he was — retained his affection and veneration for Addison, and recorded those feelings in the last lines which he traced before he hid himself from infamy under London Bridge.

Another of Addison's favorite companions was Ambrose Philips, a good Whig and a middling poet, who had the honor of bringing into fashion a species of composition which has been called, after his name, Namby Pamby. But the most remarkable members of the little senate, as Pope long afterwards called it, were Richard Steele and Thomas Tickell.[3]

[1] 1685–1736.

[2] That is, a lawyer of some literary attainments.

[3] 1686–1740. He edited Addison and wrote an elegy on his death which is noticed farther on. The rest of his poetry is worth little.

Steele had known Addison from childhood. They had been together at the Charter House and at Oxford; but circumstances had then, for a time, separated them widely. Steele had left college without taking a degree, had been disinherited by a rich relation, had led a vagrant life, had served in the army, had tried to find the philosopher's stone, and had written a religious treatise and several comedies. He was one of those people whom it is impossible either to hate or to respect. His temper was sweet, his affections warm, his spirits lively, his passions strong, and his principles weak. His life was spent in sinning and repenting; in inculcating what was right, and doing what was wrong. In speculation he was a man of piety and honor; in practice he was much of the rake and a little of the swindler. He was, however, so good-natured that it was not easy to be seriously angry with him, and that even rigid moralists felt more inclined to pity than to blame him when he diced himself into a sponging-house or drank himself into a fever. Addison regarded Steele with kindness not unmingled with scorn; tried, with little success, to keep him out of scrapes; introduced him to the great; procured a good place for him; corrected his plays; and, though by no means rich, lent him large sums of money. One of these loans appears, from a letter dated in August, 1708, to have amounted to a thousand pounds. These pecuniary transactions probably led to frequent bickerings. It is said that, on one occasion, Steele's negligence or dishonesty provoked Addison to repay himself by the help of a bailiff. We cannot join with Miss Aikin in rejecting this story. Johnson heard it from Savage,[1] who

[1] For this minor poet, see the essay on Johnson, page 58, text *and note.*

heard it from Steele. Few private transactions which took place a hundred and twenty years ago are proved by stronger evidence than this.[1] But we can by no means agree with those who condemn Addison's severity. The most amiable of mankind may well be moved to indignation when what he has earned hardly, and lent with great inconvenience to himself, for the purpose of relieving a friend in distress, is squandered with insane profusion. We will illustrate our meaning by an example which is not the less striking because it is taken from fiction. Dr. Harrison, in Fielding's[2] "Amelia," is represented as the most benevolent of human beings; yet he takes in execution, not only the goods, but the person, of his friend Booth. Dr. Harrison resorts to this strong measure because he has been informed that Booth, while pleading poverty as an excuse for not paying just debts, has been buying fine jewelry and setting up a coach. No person who is well acquainted with Steele's life and correspondence can doubt that he behaved quite as ill to Addison as Booth was accused of behaving to Dr. Harrison. The real history, we have little doubt, was something like this: a letter comes to Addison, imploring help in pathetic terms, and promising reformation and speedy repayment. Poor Dick declares that he has not an inch of candle, or a bushel of coals, or credit with the butcher for a shoulder of mutton. Addison is moved. He determines to deny himself some medals which are wanting to his series of the Twelve Cæsars,[3] to put off buying the new edition

[1] This whole story is involved in much doubt.

[2] Henry Fielding (1707–1754), author of *Tom Jones*. See the essay on Johnson, page 12, note 4.

[3] That is, the Roman emperors, beginning with Cæsar and ending with *Domitian* (96 A. D.).

of Bayle's[1] Dictionary, and to wear his old sword and buckles another year; in this way he manages to send a hundred pounds to his friend. The next day he calls on Steele, and finds scores of gentlemen and ladies assembled. The fiddles are playing. The table is groaning under Champagne, Burgundy, and pyramids of sweetmeats. Is it strange that a man whose kindness is thus abused should send sheriff's officers to reclaim what is due to him?

Tickell was a young man, fresh from Oxford, who had introduced himself to public notice by writing a most ingenious and graceful little poem in praise of the opera of "Rosamond." He deserved, and at length attained, the first place in Addison's friendship. For a time Steele and Tickell were on good terms; but they loved Addison too much to love each other, and at length became as bitter enemies as the rival bulls in Virgil.[2]

At the close of 1708 Wharton became lord lieutenant of Ireland, and appointed Addison chief secretary. Addison was consequently under the necessity of quitting London for Dublin. Besides the chief secretaryship, which was then worth about two thousand pounds a year, he obtained a patent appointing him keeper of the Irish Records for life, with a salary of three or four hundred a year. Budgell accompanied his cousin in the capacity of private secretary.

Wharton and Addison had nothing in common but Whiggism. The lord lieutenant was not only licen-

[1] Pierre Bayle (1647–1706), a celebrated French critic and freethinker, best known for his *Critical and Historical Dictionary*, which is hardly a dictionary at all, but a storehouse of miscellaneous information. Addison spent much time over it.

[2] *Georgics*, iii. 220–225.

tious and corrupt, but was distinguished from other libertines and jobbers by a callous impudence which presented the strongest contrast to the secretary's gentleness and delicacy. Many parts of the Irish administration at this time appear to have deserved serious blame, but against Addison there was not a murmur. He long afterwards asserted, what all the evidence which we have ever seen tends to prove, that his diligence and integrity gained the friendship of all the most considerable persons in Ireland.

The parliamentary career of Addison in Ireland has, we think, wholly escaped the notice of all his biographers. He was elected member for the borough of Cavan in the summer of 1709, and in the journals of two sessions his name frequently occurs. Some of the entries appear to indicate that he so far overcame his timidity as to make speeches. Nor is this by any means improbable, for the Irish House of Commons was a far less formidable audience than the English House, and many tongues which were tied by fear in the greater assembly became fluent in the smaller. Gerard Hamilton,[1] for example, who, from fear of losing the fame gained by his single speech, sat mute at Westminster during forty years, spoke with great effect at Dublin when he was secretary to Lord Halifax.[2]

While Addison was in Ireland, an event occurred to which he owes his high and permanent rank among British writers. As yet his fame rested on perfor-

[1] William Gerard Hamilton (1729–1796), nicknamed "Single-Speech Hamilton," on account of his brilliant speech of November 13, 1755, after which he kept silent except for one occasion, although he sat in every Parliament till his death.

[2] George Montagu Dunk, Earl of Halifax (1716–1771), Lord Lieutenant of Ireland in 1761.

mances which, though highly respectable, were not built for duration, and which would, if he had produced nothing else, have now been almost forgotten, — on some excellent Latin verses, on some English verses which occasionally rose above mediocrity, and on a book of travels, agreeably written, but not indicating any extraordinary powers of mind. These works showed him to be a man of taste, sense, and learning. The time had come when he was to prove himself a man of genius, and to enrich our literature with compositions which will live as long as the English language.

In the spring of 1709 Steele formed a literary project,[1] of which he was far indeed from foreseeing the consequences. Periodical papers had during many years been published in London. Most of these were political; but in some of them questions of morality, taste, and love casuistry had been discussed. The literary merit of these works was small indeed, and even their names are now known only to the curious.

Steele had been appointed gazetteer[2] by Sunderland, at the request, it is said, of Addison, and thus had access to foreign intelligence earlier and more authentic than was in those times within the reach of an ordinary news-writer.[3] This circumstance seems to have suggested to him the scheme of publishing a periodical paper on a new plan. It was to appear on the days on which the post left London for the country, which were, in that generation, the Tuesdays,

[1] *The Tatler* ran from April 12, 1709, to January 2, 1710–11.

[2] That is, publisher of news authorized by the government.

[3] See, for an account of these men, who furnished news to the remote districts, Macaulay's *History*, chap. iii., and *The Tatler*, No. 18.

Thursdays, and Saturdays. It was to contain the foreign news, accounts of theatrical representations, and the literary gossip of Will's and of the Grecian.[1] It was also to contain remarks on the fashionable topics of the day, compliments to beauties, pasquinades[2] on noted sharpers, and criticisms on popular preachers. The aim of Steele does not appear to have been at first higher than this. He was not ill-qualified to conduct the work which he had planned. His public intelligence he drew from the best sources. He knew the town, and had paid dear for his knowledge. He had read much more than the dissipated men of that time were in the habit of reading. He was a rake among scholars and a scholar among rakes. His style was easy and not incorrect, and, though his wit and humor were of no high order, his gay animal spirits imparted to his compositions an air of vivacity which ordinary readers could hardly distinguish from comic genius. His writings have been well compared to those light wines which, though deficient in body and flavor, are yet a pleasant small drink if not kept too long or carried too far.

Isaac Bickerstaff, Esq., astrologer, was an imaginary person, almost as well known in that age as Mr. Paul Pry[3] or Mr. Samuel Pickwick in ours. Swift had assumed the name of Bickerstaff in a satirical pamphlet against Partridge,[4] the maker of alma-

[1] Well-known coffee-houses of the period.

[2] That is, lampoons, so called from Pasquino, an Italian cobbler of caustic wit (fifteenth century).

[3] A character giving the name to a well-known comedy of John Poole's (about 1840).

[4] John Partridge (died 1715). See Gosse. Swift published his *Predictions for the Year 1708* as a joke on Partridge's vague prognostications, and among other things prophesied that Par-

nacs. Partridge had been fool enough to publish a furious reply. Bickerstaff had rejoined in a second pamphlet, still more diverting than the first. All the wits had combined to keep up the joke, and the town was long in convulsions of laughter. Steele determined to employ the name which this controversy had made popular; and in 1709 it was announced that Isaac Bickerstaff, Esq., astrologer, was about to publish a paper called "The Tatler."

Addison had not been consulted about this scheme; but, as soon as he heard of it, he determined to give his assistance. The effect of that assistance cannot be better described than in Steele's own words. "I fared," he said, "like a distressed prince who calls in a powerful neighbor to his aid. I was undone by my auxiliary. When I had once called him in, I could not subsist without dependence on him." "The paper," he says elsewhere, "was advanced indeed. It was raised to a greater thing than I intended it."

It is probable that Addison, when he sent across St. George's Channel his first contributions to "The Tatler," had no notion of the extent and variety of his own powers. He was the possessor of a vast mine, rich with a hundred ores; but he had been acquainted only with the least precious part of his treasures, and had hitherto contented himself with producing sometimes copper and sometimes lead, intermingled with a little silver. All at once, and by mere accident, he had lighted on an inexhaustible vein of the finest gold.

tridge would die at eleven o'clock on the night of March 29th. Immediately after this date he issued another pamphlet giving an *Account of Partridge's Death*. The poor fellow expostulated, but was overwhelmed with replies.

The mere choice and arrangement of his words would have sufficed to make his essays classical; for never — not even by Dryden, not even by Temple[1] — had the English language been written with such sweetness, grace, and facility. But this was the smallest part of Addison's praise. Had he clothed his thoughts in the half French style of Horace Walpole,[2] or in the half Latin style of Dr. Johnson, or in the half German jargon of the present day,[3] his genius would have triumphed over all faults of manner. As a moral satirist he stands unrivaled. If ever the best "Tatlers" and "Spectators" were equaled in their own kind, we should be inclined to guess that it must have been by the lost comedies of Menander.[4]

In wit, properly so called, Addison was not inferior to Cowley[5] or Butler.[6] No single ode of Cowley contains so many happy analogies as are crowded into the lines to Sir Godfrey Kneller;[7] and we would undertake to collect from the "Spectators" as great a number of ingenious illustrations as can be found in "Hudibras." The still higher faculty of inven-

[1] Sir William Temple (1628–1699), a well-known diplomatist and essayist, noted for his style. See Macaulay's essay on him.

[2] Earl of Orford (1717–1797), son of Sir Robert, famous as a dilettante and for his *Letters*.

[3] A reference to Carlyle.

[4] The Greek comic poet (342–291 B. C. *circa*). Only fragments of his numerous comedies are extant, but they had a great reputation among the ancients.

[5] See the essay on Milton, page 6, note 3.

[6] Samuel Butler (1612–1680), the famous author of *Hudibras*. See Gosse and Ward's *English Poets*.

[7] The well-known portrait painter (1648–1723). The lines by Addison referred to are felicitous, but not with the curious, unexpected felicity of Cowley at his best.

tion Addison possessed in still larger measure. The numerous fictions, generally original, often wild and grotesque, but always singularly graceful and happy, which are found in his essays, fully entitle him to the rank of a great poet, — a rank to which his metrical compositions give him no claim. As an observer of life, of manners, of all the shades of human character, he stands in the first class; and what he observed he had the art of communicating in two widely different ways. He could describe virtues, vices, habits, whims, as well as Clarendon.[1] But he could do something better: he could call human beings into existence, and make them exhibit themselves. If we wish to find anything more vivid than Addison's best portraits, we must go either to Shakespeare or to Cervantes.

But what shall we say of Addison's humor, of his sense of the ludicrous, of his power of awakening that sense in others, and of drawing mirth from incidents which occur every day, and from little peculiarities of temper and manner such as may be found in every man? We feel the charm; we give ourselves up to it: but we strive in vain to analyze it.

Perhaps the best way of describing Addison's peculiar pleasantry is to compare it with the pleasantry of some other great satirists. The three most eminent masters of the art of ridicule during the eighteenth century were, we conceive, Addison, Swift, and Voltaire. Which of the three had the greatest power of moving laughter may be questioned; but each of them, within his own domain, was supreme.

[1] Clarendon's *History of the Rebellion* is noted for its sketches of character.

Voltaire is the prince of buffoons. His merriment is without disguise or restraint. He gambols; he grins; he shakes the sides; he points the finger; he turns up the nose; he shoots out the tongue.[1] The manner of Swift is the very opposite to this. He moves laughter, but never joins in it. He appears in his works such as he appeared in society. All the company are convulsed with merriment; while the Dean, the author of all the mirth, preserves an invincible gravity and even sourness of aspect, and gives utterance to the most eccentric and ludicrous fancies with the air of a man reading the commination service.[2]

The manner of Addison is as remote from that of Swift as from that of Voltaire. He neither laughs out like the French wit, nor, like the Irish wit, throws a double portion of severity into his countenance while laughing inwardly, but preserves a look peculiarly his own, — a look of demure serenity, disturbed only by an arch sparkle of the eye, an almost imperceptible elevation of the brow, an almost imperceptible curl of the lip. His tone is never that either of a Jack Pudding or of a Cynic.[3] It is that of a gentleman in whom the quickest sense of the ridiculous is constantly tempered by good-nature and good-breeding.

We own that the humor of Addison is, in our opinion, of more delicious flavor than the humor of either

[1] Probably an example of Macaulay's characteristic exaggeration.

[2] A service of the English Church, read on Ash Wednesday, reciting God's anger against sinners.

[3] That is, of a merry-andrew or buffoon, or of a snárling philosopher like Diogenes.

Swift or Voltaire. Thus much, at least, is certain, that both Swift and Voltaire have been successfully mimicked, and that no man has yet been able to mimic Addison. The letter of the Abbé Coyer[1] to Pansophe is Voltaire all over, and imposed, during a long time, on the Academicians of Paris. There are passages in Arbuthnot's[2] satirical works which we, at least, cannot distinguish from Swift's best writing. But of the many eminent men who have made Addison their model, though several have copied his mere diction with happy effect, none has been able to catch the tone of his pleasantry. In "The World," in "The Connoisseur," in "The Mirror," in "The Lounger,"[3] there are numerous papers written in obvious imitation of his "Tatlers" and "Spectators." Most of those papers have some merit; many are very lively and amusing; but there is not a single one which could be passed off as Addison's on a critic of the smallest perspicacity.

But that which chiefly distinguishes Addison from Swift, from Voltaire, from almost all the other great masters of ridicule, is the grace, the nobleness, the

[1] Gabriel François Coyer (died in 1782, very old), a Jesuit who resigned from his order and devoted himself to letters. He translated Blackstone, and wrote *Bagatelles Morales.*

[2] Dr. John Arbuthnot (1667–1735), the friend of Pope and Swift, and a noted wit. He wrote most, if not all, of the *Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus,* which Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* has now eclipsed, and a *History of John Bull,* besides dissertations on medals, etc., and some medical works.

[3] Papers in imitation of *The Spectator. The World* (1753–56) was edited by the poet Edward Moore; *The Connoisseur* (1754–56) was edited by George Colman and Bennet Thornton; *The Mirror* (1779–80) and *The Lounger* (1785–87) were Edinburgh journals, to which Henry Mackenzie was the chief contributor.

moral purity, which we find even in his merriment. Severity, gradually hardening and darkening into misanthropy, characterizes the works of Swift. The nature of Voltaire was, indeed, not inhuman; but he venerated nothing. Neither in the masterpieces of art nor in the purest examples of virtue, neither in the Great First Cause nor in the awful enigma of the grave, could he see anything but subjects for drollery.[1] The more solemn and august the theme, the more monkey-like was his grimacing and chattering. The mirth of Swift is the mirth of Mephistopheles;[2] the mirth of Voltaire is the mirth of Puck.[3] If, as Soame Jenyns[4] oddly imagined, a portion of the happiness of seraphim and just men made perfect be derived from an exquisite perception of the ludicrous, their mirth must surely be none other than the mirth of Addison, — a mirth consistent with tender compassion for all that is frail, and with profound reverence for all that is sublime. Nothing great, nothing amiable, no moral duty, no doctrine of natural or revealed religion, has ever been associated by Addison with any degrading idea. His humanity is without a parallel in literary history. The highest proof of virtue is to possess boundless power without abusing it. No kind of power is more formidable than the power of making men ridiculous, and that power Addison possessed in boundless measure. How grossly that power was abused by Swift and by Voltaire is well known. But of Addison it may be confidently affirmed that he has blackened no man's character;

[1] This statement is more than questionable.

[2] The cynical demon of Goethe's *Faust*.

[3] The aerial spirit of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

[4] See the essay on Johnson, page 34, note 2.

nay, that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to find in all the volumes which he has left us a single taunt which can be called ungenerous or unkind. Yet he had detractors, whose malignity might have seemed to justify as terrible a revenge as that which men not superior to him in genius wreaked on Bettesworth[1] and on Franc de Pompignan.[2] He was a politician; he was the best writer of his party; he lived in times of fierce excitement, — in times when persons of high character and station stooped to scurrility such as is now practiced only by the basest of mankind: yet no provocation and no example could induce him to return railing for railing.

Of the service which his essays rendered to morality it is difficult to speak too highly. It is true that, when "The Tatler" appeared, that age of outrageous profaneness and licentiousness which followed the Restoration had passed away. Jeremy Collier[3] had shamed the theatres into something which, compared with the excesses of Etherege and Wycherley,[4] might be called decency; yet there still lingered in the public mind a pernicious notion that there was some con-

[1] A Dublin lawyer satirized by Swift.

[2] Jean Jacques le Franc, Marquis of Pompignan (1709–1784), author of the once famous tragedy of *Dido*, who on his election to the French Academy in 1760 delivered a discourse defending Christianity, which was satirized by Voltaire and others.

[3] 1650–1726. A nonjuring preacher (*i. e.*, one who refused to swear allegiance to William and Mary), who attacked the vices of the stage in a book which Dryden, one of the offending dramatists, had to admit to be fully founded on facts.

[4] Sir George Etherege (1636–1694) and William Wycherley (1640–1715), noted representatives of the comic drama of the Restoration, which reached its highest point in Congreve.

nection between genius and profligacy, between the domestic virtues and the sullen formality of the Puritans. That error it is the glory of Addison to have dispelled. He taught the nation that the faith and the morality of Hale[1] and Tillotson might be found in company with wit more sparkling than the wit of Congreve, and with humor richer than the humor of Vanbrugh.[2] So effectually, indeed, did he retort on vice the mockery which had recently been directed against virtue, that since his time the open violation of decency has always been considered among us as the mark of a fool. And this revolution, the greatest and most salutary ever effected by any satirist, he accomplished, be it remembered, without writing one personal lampoon.

In the early contributions of Addison to "The Tatler" his peculiar powers were not fully exhibited, yet from the first his superiority to all his coadjutors was evident. Some of his later "Tatlers" are fully equal to anything that he ever wrote. Among the portraits, we most admire Tom Folio, Ned Softly, and the Political Upholsterer. The proceedings of the "Court of Honor," the "Thermometer of Zeal," the story of the "Frozen Words," the "Memoirs of the Shilling," are excellent specimens of that ingenious and lively species of fiction in which Addison excelled all men. There is one still better paper of the same class; but though that paper, a hundred and thirty-three years

[1] Sir Matthew Hale (1607–1676), the great Chief Justice, as much noted for his probity of character as for his juristic attainments.

[2] Sir John Vanbrugh (1666–1726), another of the comic dramatists of the Restoration, humorous but coarse.

ago, was probably thought as edifying as one of Smalridge's[1] sermons, we dare not indicate it to the squeamish readers of the nineteenth century.

During the session of Parliament which commenced in November, 1709, and which the impeachment of Sacheverell has made memorable, Addison appears to have resided in London. "The Tatler" was now more popular than any periodical paper had ever been, and his connection with it was generally known: it was not known, however, that almost everything good in "The Tatler" was his. The truth is, that the fifty or sixty numbers which we owe to him were not merely the best, but so decidedly the best that any five of them are more valuable than all the two hundred numbers in which he had no share.[2]

He required at this time all the solace which he could derive from literary success. The Queen had always disliked the Whigs. She had during some years disliked the Marlborough family: but, reigning by a disputed title, she could not venture directly to oppose herself to a majority of both houses of Parliament; and, engaged as she was in a war on the event of which her own crown was staked, she could not venture to disgrace a great and successful general. But at length, in the year 1710, the causes which had restrained her from showing her aversion to the Low Church party ceased to operate. The trial of Sacheverell produced an outbreak of public feeling scarcely less violent than the outbreaks which we can ourselves

[1] George Smalridge, D. D. (1666–1719), noted scholar and divine, died Bishop of Bristol. He is the Favonius of *The Tatler*, No. 114.

[2] Almost certainly an exaggeration.

remember in 1820 and in 1831.[1] The country gentlemen, the country clergymen, the rabble of the towns, were all, for once, on the same side. It was clear that, if a general election took place before the excitement abated, the Tories would have a majority. The services of Marlborough had been so splendid that they were no longer necessary. The Queen's throne was secure from all attack on the part of Louis; indeed, it seemed much more likely that the English and German armies would divide the spoils of Versailles and Marli[2] than that a marshal of France would bring back the Pretender[3] to St. James's.[4] The Queen, acting by the advice of Harley, determined to dismiss her servants. In June the change commenced. Sunderland was the first who fell. The Tories exulted over his fall. The Whigs tried, during a few weeks, to persuade themselves that her Majesty had acted only from personal dislike to the secretary, and that she meditated no further alteration; but, early in August, Godolphin was surprised by a letter from Anne which directed him to break his white staff.[5] Even after this event, the irresolution or dissimulation of Harley kept up the hopes of the Whigs during another month, and then the ruin

[1] In 1820 the Reform agitation, the Cato Street Conspiracy, riots in Scotland, the trial of Queen Caroline. In 1831 the agitation over the defeat of the bill for Parliamentary Reform (carried in 1832).

[2] Marli was noted for the sumptuous gardens and château of Louis XIV. It was five miles north of Versailles, where the King's great palace was.

[3] See the essay on Milton, page 62, note 4.

[4] St. James's Palace, in London, long a residence of the British sovereigns.

[5] The sign of the office of Lord High Treasurer.

became rapid and violent. The Parliament was dissolved. The ministers were turned out. The Tories were called to office. The tide of popularity ran violently in favor of the High Church party. That party, feeble in the late House of Commons, was now irresistible. The power which the Tories had thus suddenly acquired, they used with blind and stupid ferocity. The howl which the whole pack set up for prey and for blood appalled even him [1] who had roused and unchained them. When, at this distance of time, we calmly review the conduct of the discarded ministers, we cannot but feel a movement of indignation at the injustice with which they were treated. No body of men had ever administered the government with more energy, ability, and moderation; and their success had been proportioned to their wisdom. They had saved Holland and Germany. They had humbled France. They had, as it seemed, all but torn Spain from the house of Bourbon. They had made England the first power in Europe. At home they had united England and Scotland.[2] They had respected the rights of conscience and the liberty of the subject. They retired leaving their country at the height of prosperity and glory. And yet they were pursued to their retreat by such a roar of obloquy as was never raised against the government which threw away thirteen colonies, or against the government which sent a gallant army to perish in the ditches of Walcheren.[3]

[1] Harley.

[2] By the Act of Union, 1706.

[3] An island in the Dutch province of Zealand. In 1809 an expedition was sent thither in order to divert Napoleon for the benefit of Austria. The troops were taken with malaria, and thousands perished, so that the enterprise had to be abandoned,

None of the Whigs suffered more in the general wreck than Addison. He had just sustained some heavy pecuniary losses, of the nature of which we are imperfectly informed, when his secretaryship was taken from him. He had reason to believe that he should also be deprived of the small Irish office which he held by patent. He had just resigned his fellowship. It seems probable that he had already ventured to raise his eyes to a great lady,[1] and that while his political friends were in power, and while his own fortunes were rising, he had been, in the phrase of the romances which were then fashionable, "permitted to hope." But Mr. Addison the ingenious writer, and Mr. Addison the chief secretary, were, in her ladyship's opinion, two very different persons. All these calamities united, however, could not disturb the serene cheerfulness of a mind conscious of innocence, and rich in its own wealth. He told his friends, with smiling resignation, that they ought to admire his philosophy; that he had lost at once his fortune, his place, his fellowship, and his mistress; that he must think of turning tutor again; and yet that his spirits were as good as ever.

He had one consolation. Of the unpopularity which his friends had incurred, he had no share. Such was the esteem with which he was regarded that, while the most violent measures were taken for the purpose of forcing Tory members on Whig corporations,[2] he was returned to Parliament without even

after having accomplished nothing, and having cost about twenty million pounds.

[1] The Countess Dowager of Warwick. See page 206.

[2] That is, on boroughs that usually returned Whig members of Parliament.

a contest. Swift, who was now in London, and who had already determined on quitting the Whigs, wrote to Stella in these remarkable words: "The Tories carry it among the new members six to one. Mr. Addison's election has passed easy and undisputed, and I believe, if he had a mind to be king, he would hardly be refused."

The good will with which the Tories regarded Addison is the more honorable to him, because it had not been purchased by any concession on his part. During the general election, he published a political journal entitled "The Whig Examiner."[1] Of that journal it may be sufficient to say that Johnson, in spite of his strong political prejudice, pronounced it to be superior in wit to any of Swift's writings on the other side.[2] When it ceased to appear, Swift, in a letter to Stella, expressed his exultation at the death of so formidable an antagonist. "He might well rejoice," says Johnson, "at the death of that which he could not have killed." "On no occasion," he adds, "was the genius of Addison more vigorously exerted, and on none did the superiority of his powers more evidently appear."

The only use which Addison appears to have made of the favor with which he was regarded by the Tories was to save some of his friends from the general ruin of the Whig party. He felt himself to be in a situation which made it his duty to take a decided part in politics. But the case of Steele and of

[1] Five numbers appeared, — Thursday, September 14, to Thursday, October 12, 1710.

[2] Swift was writing for *The Examiner*, a Tory organ, which seems to have run from August 3, 1710, to July 26, 1714. He was also writing pamphlets.

Ambrose Philips was different. For Philips, Addison even condescended to solicit, with what success we have not ascertained. Steele held two places: he was gazetteer, and he was also a commissioner of stamps. The gazette was taken from him, but he was suffered to retain his place in the Stamp Office on an implied understanding that he should not be active against the new government; and he was, during more than two years, induced by Addison to observe this armistice with tolerable fidelity.

Isaac Bickerstaff accordingly became silent upon politics, and the article of news which had once formed about one third of his paper altogether disappeared. "The Tatler" had completely changed its character: it was now nothing but a series of essays on books, morals, and manners. Steele, therefore, resolved to bring it to a close, and to commence a new work on an improved plan. It was announced that this new work would be published daily. The undertaking was generally regarded as bold, or rather rash; but the event amply justified the confidence with which Steele relied on the fertility of Addison's genius. On the 2d of January, 1711, appeared the last "Tatler." At the beginning of March following, appeared the first of an incomparable series of papers, containing observations on life and literature by an imaginary Spectator.[1]

The Spectator himself was conceived and drawn by Addison, and it is not easy to doubt that the portrait

[1] *The Spectator* ran from Thursday, March 1, 1710–11, to Saturday, December 6, 1712, — 555 daily numbers. On Friday, June 18, 1714, Addison took it up in tri-weekly numbers, and continued it to Monday, December 20, 1714, — making in all 635 numbers.

was meant to be in some features a likeness of the painter. The Spectator is a gentleman who, after passing a studious youth at the university, has traveled on classic ground, and has bestowed much attention on curious points of antiquity. He has, on his return, fixed his residence in London, and has observed all the forms of life which are to be found in that great city; has daily listened to the wits of Will's, has smoked with the philosophers of the Grecian, and has mingled with the parsons at Child's and with the politicians at the St. James's. In the morning he often listens to the hum of the Exchange; in the evening his face is constantly to be seen in the pit of Drury Lane Theatre. But an insurmountable bashfulness prevents him from opening his mouth, except in a small circle of intimate friends.

These friends were first sketched by Steele. Four of the club — the templar, the clergyman, the soldier, and the merchant — were uninteresting figures, fit only for a background; but the other two, — an old country baronet and an old town rake, — though not delineated with a very delicate pencil, had some good strokes. Addison took the rude outlines into his own hands, retouched them, colored them, and is in truth the creator of the Sir Roger de Coverley and the Will Honeycomb with whom we are all familiar.

The plan of "The Spectator" must be allowed to be both original and eminently happy. Every valuable essay in the series may be read with pleasure separately; yet the five or six hundred essays form a whole, and a whole which has the interest of a novel. It must be remembered, too, that at that time no novel giving a lively and powerful picture of the common life and manners of England had ap-

peared. Richardson[1] was working as a compositor. Fielding was robbing birds'-nests. Smollett[2] was not yet born. The narrative, therefore, which connects together the Spectator's essays gave to our ancestors their first taste of an exquisite and untried pleasure. That narrative was indeed constructed with no art or labor. The events were such events as occur every day. Sir Roger comes up to town to see Eugenio, as the worthy baronet always calls Prince Eugene, goes with the Spectator on the water to Spring Gardens,[3] walks among the tombs in the Abbey, and is frightened by the Mohawks,[4] but conquers his apprehension so far as to go to the theatre when "The Distressed Mother"[5] is acted. The Spectator pays a visit in the summer to Coverley Hall; is charmed with the old house, the old butler, and the old chaplain; eats a jack caught by Will Wimble; rides to the assizes, and hears a point of law discussed by Tom Touchy. At last a letter from the honest butler brings to the club the news that Sir Roger is dead. Will Honeycomb marries and reforms at sixty. The club breaks up, and the Spectator resigns his functions. Such events can hardly be said to form a plot; yet they are related with such truth, such grace, such wit, such humor, such pathos, such know-

[1] See the essay on Johnson, page 28, note 3.

[2] Tobias Smollett (1721–1771), the great Scotch story-teller rather than novelist, author of *Roderick Random*, *Peregrine Pickle*, *Humphrey Clinker*, etc.

[3] A pleasure resort at Charing Cross, afterwards the famous Vauxhall. See *The Spectator*, No. 383.

[4] A set of wild young men who assaulted wayfarers at night, and were suppressed with difficulty.

[5] A play by Ambrose Philips, translated from Racine's *Andromache*, for which Addison wrote an epilogue.

ledge of the human heart, such knowledge of the ways of the world, that they charm us on the hundredth perusal. We have not the least doubt that, if Addison had written a novel on an extensive plan, it would have been superior to any that we possess. As it is, he is entitled to be considered not only as the greatest of the English essayists, but as the forerunner of the great English novelists.

We say this of Addison alone, for Addison is the Spectator. About three sevenths of the work are his, and it is no exaggeration to say that his worst essay is as good as the best essay of any of his coadjutors. His best essays approach near to absolute perfection; nor is their excellence more wonderful than their variety. His invention never seems to flag; nor is he ever under the necessity of repeating himself, or of wearing out a subject. There are no dregs in his wine. He regales us after the fashion of that prodigal nabob who held that there was only one good glass in a bottle. As soon as we have tasted the first sparkling foam of a jest, it is withdrawn, and a fresh draught of nectar is at our lips. On the Monday we have an allegory as lively and ingenious as Lucian's "Auction of Lives;"[1] on the Tuesday, an Eastern apologue as richly colored as the tales of Scheherezade;[2] on the Wednesday, a character described with the skill of La Bruyère;[3] on the Thursday, a scene from common life equal to the best chap-

[1] Lucian of Samosata (120–200 A. D. *circa*), the famous Greek satirist, noted for his *Dialogues* against superstition and vice.

[2] That is, *The Arabian Nights' Entertainments.*

[3] Jean de la Bruyère (1645–1696), a great French moralist. His chief work is called in brief *The Characters.*

ters in "The Vicar of Wakefield;"[1] on the Friday, some sly Horatian pleasantry on fashionable follies, on hoops, patches, or puppet shows; and on the Saturday, a religious meditation which will bear a comparison with the finest passages in Massillon.[2]

It is dangerous to select where there is so much that deserves the highest praise. We will venture, however, to say that any person who wishes to form a just notion of the extent and variety of Addison's powers will do well to read at one sitting the following papers, — the two "Visits to the Abbey," the "Visit to the Exchange," the "Journal of the Retired Citizen," the "Vision of Mirza," the "Transmigrations of Pug the Monkey," and the "Death of Sir Roger de Coverley."

The least valuable of Addison's contributions to "The Spectator" are, in the judgment of our age, his critical papers; yet his critical papers are always luminous, and often ingenious. The very worst of them must be regarded as creditable to him, when the character of the school in which he had been trained is fairly considered. The best of them were much too good for his readers. In truth, he was not so far behind our generation as he was before his own. No essays in "The Spectator" were more censured and derided than those in which he raised his voice against the contempt with which our fine old ballads were regarded, and showed the scoffers that the same gold which, burnished and polished, gives lustre to the "Æneid" and the Odes of Horace is mingled with the rude dross of "Chevy Chace."

[1] See the essay on Goldsmith, page 77.

[2] Jean Baptiste Massillon (1663–1742), the famous French preacher.

It is not strange that the success of "The Spectator" should have been such as no similar work has ever obtained. The number of copies daily distributed was at first three thousand. It subsequently increased, and had risen to near four thousand when the stamp tax was imposed. That tax was fatal to a crowd of journals. "The Spectator," however, stood its ground, doubled its price, and, though its circulation fell off, still yielded a large revenue both to the state and to the authors. For particular papers the demand was immense; of some, it is said, twenty thousand copies were required. But this was not all. To have "The Spectator" served up every morning with the bohea and rolls was a luxury for the few. The majority were content to wait till essays enough had appeared to form a volume. Ten thousand copies of each volume were immediately taken off, and new editions were called for. It must be remembered that the population of England was then hardly a third of what it now is. The number of Englishmen who were in the habit of reading was probably not a sixth of what it now is. A shopkeeper or a farmer who found any pleasure in literature was a rarity. Nay, there was doubtless more than one knight of the shire[1] whose country-seat did not contain ten books, receipt books and books on farriery included. In these circumstances, the sale of "The Spectator" must be considered as indicating a popularity quite as great as that of the most successful works of Sir Walter Scott and Mr. Dickens in our own time.

At the close of 1712 "The Spectator" ceased to appear. It was probably felt that the short-faced

[1] A member of the House of Commons for a county at large.

gentleman and his club had been long enough before the town, and that it was time to withdraw them, and to replace them by a new set of characters. In a few weeks the first number of "The Guardian"[1] was published; but "The Guardian" was unfortunate both in its birth and in its death. It began in dullness, and disappeared in a tempest of faction. The original plan was bad. Addison contributed nothing till sixty-six numbers had appeared; and it was then impossible to make "The Guardian" what "The Spectator" had been. Nestor Ironside and the Miss Lizards[2] were people to whom even he could impart no interest. He could only furnish some excellent little essays, both serious and comic; and this he did.

Why Addison gave no assistance to "The Guardian" during the first two months of its existence is a question which has puzzled the editors and biographers, but which seems to us to admit of a very easy solution. He was then engaged in bringing his "Cato" on the stage.

The first four acts of this drama had been lying in his desk since his return from Italy. His modest and sensitive nature shrank from the risk of a public and shameful failure; and, though all who saw the manuscript were loud in praise, some thought it possible that an audience might become impatient even of very good rhetoric, and advised Addison to print the play without hazarding a representation. At length, after many fits of apprehension, the poet yielded to the urgency of his political friends, who hoped that the public would discover some analogy between the

[1] It ran for 175 numbers, being published daily from March 12 to October 1, 1713. Addison wrote 53 numbers.

[2] The Guardian and his wards.

followers of Cæsar and the Tories; between Sempronius [1] and the apostate Whigs; between Cato, struggling to the last for the liberties of Rome, and the band of patriots who still stood firm round Halifax and Wharton.

Addison gave the play to the managers of Drury Lane Theatre without stipulating for any advantage to himself. They therefore thought themselves bound to spare no cost in scenery and dresses. The decorations, it is true, would not have pleased the skillful eye of Mr. Macready.[2] Juba's waistcoat blazed with gold lace; Marcia's hoop was worthy of a duchess on the birthday; [3] and Cato wore a wig worth fifty guineas. The prologue was written by Pope, and is undoubtedly a dignified and spirited composition. The part of the hero was excellently played by Booth.[4] Steele undertook to pack a house. The boxes were in a blaze with the stars [5] of the peers in opposition. The pit was crowded with attentive and friendly listeners from the Inns of Court [6] and the literary coffee-houses. Sir Gilbert Heathcote,[7] governor of the Bank of England, was at the head of a powerful body

[1] A Roman senator, one of the characters of the play.

[2] William Charles Macready (1793–1873), in his prime as a tragedian when this essay was written.

[3] Juba was a prince of Numidia; Marcia, Cato's daughter. "Birthday" refers to the reception held by the sovereign on this anniversary.

[4] Barton Booth (1681–1733), the leading tragedian of the day.

[5] That is, the insignia of the orders (Bath, Garter, etc.) to which they belonged.

[6] Incorporated legal societies in London which have the exclusive privilege of calling candidates to the bar.

[7] 1651–1733. Also Lord Mayor of London; mentioned favorably by both Pope and Swift.

of auxiliaries from the city, warm men and true Whigs, but better known at Jonathan's and Garraway's [1] than in the haunts of wits and critics.

These precautions were quite superfluous. The Tories, as a body, regarded Addison with no unkind feelings. Nor was it for their interest — professing, as they did, profound reverence for law and prescription, and abhorrence both of popular insurrections and of standing armies — to appropriate to themselves reflections thrown on the great military chief and demagogue [2] who, with the support of the legions and of the common people, subverted all the ancient institutions of his country. Accordingly, every shout that was raised by the members of the Kit Cat was echoed by the High Churchmen of the October; [3] and the curtain at length fell amidst thunders of unanimous applause.

The delight and admiration of the town were described by "The Guardian" in terms which we might attribute to partiality, were it not that "The Examiner," the organ of the ministry, held similar language. The Tories, indeed, found much to sneer at in the conduct of their opponents. Steele had, on this as on other occasions, shown more zeal than taste or judgment. The honest citizens who marched under the orders of Sir Gibby,[4] as he was facetiously called, probably knew better when to buy and when to sell stock than when to clap and when to hiss at

[1] Coffee-houses frequented by commercial men.

[2] Cæsar.

[3] A club frequented by Tory members of Parliament where much *October* ale was drunk.

[4] That is, Heathcote, though the sentence reads as if it were Steele.

a play, and incurred some ridicule by making the hypocritical Sempronius their favorite, and by giving to his insincere rants louder plaudits than they bestowed on the temperate eloquence of Cato. Wharton,[1] too, who had the incredible effrontery to applaud the lines about flying from prosperous vice and from the power of impious men to a private station, did not escape the sarcasms of those who justly thought that he could fly from nothing more vicious or impious than himself. The epilogue, which was written by Garth,[2] a zealous Whig, was severely and not unreasonably censured as ignoble and out of place. But Addison was described, even by the bitterest Tory writers, as a gentleman of wit and virtue, in whose friendship many persons of both parties were happy, and whose name ought not to be mixed up with factious squabbles.

Of the jests by which the triumph of the Whig party was disturbed, the most severe and happy was Bolingbroke's. Between two acts he sent for Booth to his box, and presented him, before the whole theatre, with a purse of fifty guineas for defending the cause of liberty so well against a perpetual dictator. This was a pungent allusion to the attempt which Marlborough had made, not long before his fall, to obtain a patent creating him captain-general for life.

It was April, and in April a hundred and thirty years ago the London season was thought to be far advanced. During a whole month, however, "Cato" was performed to overflowing houses, and brought

[1] Philip, Duke of Wharton (1698–1731), son of the Marquis, noted for his debaucheries.

[2] Sir Samuel Garth (1660–1718), physician and poet, author of *The Dispensary*, a mock-heroic poem now little read.

into the treasury of the theatre twice the gains of an ordinary spring. In the summer the Drury Lane company went down to the act[1] at Oxford, and there, before an audience which retained an affectionate remembrance of Addison's accomplishments and virtues, his tragedy was acted during several days. The gownsmen began to besiege the theatre in the forenoon, and by one in the afternoon all the seats were filled.

About the merits of the piece which had so extraordinary an effect, the public, we suppose, has made up its mind. To compare it with the masterpieces of the Attic stage,[2] with the great English dramas of the time of Elizabeth, or even with the productions of Schiller's[3] manhood, would be absurd indeed. Yet it contains excellent dialogue and declamation, and, among plays fashioned on the French model, must be allowed to rank high; not, indeed, with "Athalie" or "Saul," but, we think, not below "Cinna,"[4] and certainly above any other English tragedy of the same school, above many of the plays of Corneille, above many of the plays of Voltaire and Alfieri,[5] and above some plays of Racine. Be this as it may, we have little doubt that "Cato" did as much as the "Tatlers," "Spectators," and "Freeholders" united to raise Addison's fame among his contemporaries.

[1] That is, the occasion of the completion of degrees.

[2] That is, with the plays of Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides.

[3] Friedrich von Schiller (1759–1805). Macaulay refers to such plays as *Maria Stuart* and *Wilhelm Tell*.

[4] Dramas by Racine, Alfieri, and Pierre Corneille (1606–1684).

[5] Count Vittorio Alfieri (1749–1803), the great Italian tragic poet.

The modesty and good nature of the successful dramatist had tamed even the malignity of faction. But literary envy, it should seem, is a fiercer passion than party spirit. It was by a zealous Whig that the fiercest attack on the Whig tragedy was made. John Dennis[1] published "Remarks on Cato," which were written with some acuteness and with much coarseness and asperity. Addison neither defended himself nor retaliated. On many points he had an excellent defense, and nothing would have been easier than to retaliate, for Dennis had written bad odes, bad tragedies, bad comedies; he had, moreover, a larger share than most men of those infirmities and eccentricities which excite laughter; and Addison's power of turning either an absurd book or an absurd man into ridicule was unrivaled. Addison, however, serenely conscious of his superiority, looked with pity on his assailant, whose temper, naturally irritable and gloomy, had been soured by want, by controversy, and by literary failures.

But among the young candidates for Addison's favor there was one distinguished by talents from the rest, and distinguished, we fear, not less by malignity and insincerity. Pope was only twenty-five. But his powers had expanded to their full maturity; and his best poem, "The Rape of the Lock," had recently been published.[2] Of his genius Addison had always expressed high admiration; but Addison had early discerned, what might, indeed, have been discerned by an eye less penetrating than his, that the diminutive, crooked, sickly boy was eager to revenge himself

[1] 1657–1734. A critic who was himself the butt of Swift and Pope, whose satires have made him live.

[2] 1714.

on society for the unkindness of nature. In "The Spectator," the "Essay on Criticism" had been praised with cordial warmth; but a gentle hint had been added that the writer of so excellent a poem would have done well to avoid ill-natured personalities. Pope, though evidently more galled by the censure than gratified by the praise, returned thanks for the admonition, and promised to profit by it. The two writers continued to exchange civilities, counsel, and small good offices. Addison publicly extolled Pope's miscellaneous pieces, and Pope furnished Addison with a prologue. This did not last long. Pope hated Dennis, whom he had injured without provocation.[1] The appearance of the "Remarks on Cato" gave the irritable poet an opportunity of venting his malice under the show of friendship; and such an opportunity could not but be welcome to a nature which was implacable in enmity, and which always preferred the tortuous to the straight path. He published, accordingly, "The Narrative of the Frenzy of John Dennis." But Pope had mistaken his powers. He was a great master of invective and sarcasm; he could dissect a character in terse and sonorous couplets, brilliant with antithesis; but of dramatic talent he was altogether destitute. If he had written a lampoon on Dennis, such as that on Atticus or that on Sporus,[2] the old grumbler would have been crushed. But Pope writing dialogue resembled — to borrow Horace's imagery

[1] Probably in the *Essay on Criticism.*

[2] For the lampoon on Atticus see page 203 and note; this famous attack, together with that on Sporus (John, Lord Hervey, author of the *Memoirs of the Court of George II.*), occurs in the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot.*

and his own — a wolf which, instead of biting, should take to kicking, or a monkey which should try to sting.[1] The "Narrative" is utterly contemptible. Of argument there is not even a show; and the jests are such as, if they were introduced into a farce, would call forth the hisses of the shilling gallery. Dennis raves about the drama, and the nurse thinks that he is calling for a dram. "There is," he cries, "no peripetia[2] in the tragedy, no change of fortune, no change at all." "Pray, good sir, be not angry," says the old woman; "I 'll fetch change." This is not exactly the pleasantry of Addison.[3]

There can be no doubt that Addison saw through this officious zeal, and felt himself deeply aggrieved by it. So foolish and spiteful a pamphlet could do him no good, and, if he were thought to have any hand in it, must do him harm. Gifted with incomparable powers of ridicule, he had never, even in self-defense, used those powers inhumanly or uncourteously; and he was not disposed to let others make his fame and his interests a pretext under which they might commit outrages from which he had himself constantly abstained. He accordingly declared that he had no concern in the "Narrative," that he disapproved of it, and that, if he answered the remarks, he would answer them like a gentleman; and he took care to communicate this to Dennis. Pope was bitterly mortified, and to this transaction we are inclined to ascribe the hatred with which he ever after regarded Addison.

[1] Horace, *Satires*, II. i. 55 ; Pope's imitation, ll. 86, 87.

[2] "Peripetia," that part of a drama in which the plot is unraveled and the whole concludes.

[3] Macaulay has not in the least exaggerated the worthlessness of *Pope's* performance.

In September, 1713, "The Guardian" ceased to appear. Steele had gone mad about politics. A general election had just taken place. He had been chosen member for Stockbridge, and he fully expected to play a first part in Parliament. The immense success of the "Tatler" and "Spectator" had turned his head. He had been the editor of both those papers, and was not aware how entirely they owed their influence and popularity to the genius of his friend. His spirits, always violent, were now excited by vanity, ambition, and faction to such a pitch that he every day committed some offense against good sense and good taste. All the discreet and moderate members of his own party regretted and condemned his folly. "I am in a thousand troubles," Addison wrote, "about poor Dick, and wish that his zeal for the public may not be ruinous to himself. But he has sent me word that he is determined to go on, and that any advice I may give him in this particular will have no weight with him."

Steele set up a political paper called "The Englishman," [1] which, as it was not supported by contributions from Addison, completely failed. By this work, by some other writings of the same kind, and by the airs which he gave himself at the first meeting of the new Parliament, he made the Tories so angry that they determined to expel him.[2] The Whigs stood by him gallantly, but were unable to save him. The vote of expulsion was regarded by all dispassionate men as a tyrannical exercise of the power of the majority. But Steele's violence and folly, though they by no means justified the steps which his enemies took, had

[1] It ran 56 numbers, beginning October 6, 1713.

[2] He was expelled March 18, 1714.

completely disgusted his friends; nor did he ever regain the place which he had held in the public estimation.

Addison about this time conceived the design of adding an eighth volume to "The Spectator." In June, 1714, the first number of the new series appeared, and during about six months three papers were published weekly.[1] Nothing can be more striking than the contrast between "The Englishman" and the eighth volume of "The Spectator," between Steele without Addison and Addison without Steele. "The Englishman" is forgotten, — the eighth volume of "The Spectator" contains, perhaps, the finest essays, both serious and playful, in the English language.

Before this volume was completed, the death of Anne[2] produced an entire change in the administration of public affairs. The blow fell suddenly. It found the Tory party distracted by internal feuds, and unprepared for any great effort. Harley had just been disgraced. Bolingbroke, it was supposed, would be the chief minister. But the Queen was on her death-bed before the white staff had been given, and her last public act was to deliver it with a feeble hand to the Duke of Shrewsbury. The emergency produced a coalition between all sections of public men who were attached to the Protestant succession. George I. was proclaimed without opposition. A council, in which the leading Whigs had seats, took the direction of affairs till the new King should arrive. The first act of the lords justices was to appoint Addison their secretary.

[1] From Friday, June 18, to Monday, December 20, 1714, 79 numbers.

[2] August, 1714.

There is an idle tradition that he was directed to prepare a letter to the King; that he could not satisfy himself as to the style of this composition, and that the lords justices called in a clerk, who at once did what was wanted. It is not strange that a story so flattering to mediocrity should be popular, and we are sorry to deprive dunces of their consolation. But the truth must be told. It was well observed by Sir James Mackintosh,[1] whose knowledge of these times was unequaled, that Addison never, in any official document, affected wit or eloquence, and that his dispatches are, without exception, remarkable for unpretending simplicity. Everybody who knows with what ease Addison's finest essays were produced must be convinced that, if well-turned phrases had been wanted, he would have had no difficulty in finding them. We are, however, inclined to believe that the story is not absolutely without a foundation. It may well be that Addison did not know, till he had consulted experienced clerks who remembered the time when William III. was absent on the Continent, in what form a letter from the Council of Regency to the King ought to be drawn. We think it very likely that the ablest statesmen of our time — Lord John Russell, Sir Robert Peel, Lord Palmerston, for example — would, in similar circumstances, be found quite as ignorant. Every office has some little mysteries which the dullest man may learn with a little attention, and which the greatest man cannot possibly know by intuition. One paper must be signed by the chief of the department; another by his deputy;

[1] 1765–1832. Statesman, essayist, and historian. See Macaulay's essay on him. He wrote a work on the Revolution of 1688.

to a third the royal sign manual is necessary. One communication is to be registered, and another is not. One sentence must be in black ink, and another in red ink. If the ablest secretary for Ireland were moved to the India Board,[1] if the ablest president of the India Board were moved to the War Office, he would require instruction on points like these; and we do not doubt that Addison required such instruction when he became, for the first time, secretary to the lords justices.

George I. took possession of his kingdom without opposition. A new ministry was formed, and a new Parliament favorable to the Whigs chosen. Sunderland was appointed lord lieutenant of Ireland, and Addison again went to Dublin as chief secretary.

At Dublin, Swift resided; and there was much speculation about the way in which the Dean and the Secretary would behave towards each other. The relations which existed between these remarkable men form an interesting and pleasing portion of literary history. They had early attached themselves to the same political party and to the same patrons. While Anne's Whig ministry was in power, the visits of Swift to London, and the official residence of Addison in Ireland, had given them opportunities of knowing each other. They were the two shrewdest observers of their age, but their observations on each other had led them to favorable conclusions. Swift did full justice to the rare powers of conversation which were latent under the bashful deportment of Addison. Addison, on the other hand, discerned much good nature under the severe look and manner

[1] The administration of India did not pass from the East India Company to the Crown until 1858.

of Swift; and, indeed, the Swift of 1708 and the Swift of 1738[1] were two very different men.

But the paths of the two friends diverged widely. The Whig statesmen loaded Addison with solid benefits. They praised Swift, asked him to dinner, and did nothing more for him. His profession laid them under a difficulty. In the State they could not promote him, and they had reason to fear that, by bestowing preferment in the Church on the author of "The Tale of a Tub,"[2] they might give scandal to the public, which had no high opinion of their orthodoxy. He did not make fair allowance for the difficulties which prevented Halifax and Somers from serving him, thought himself an ill-used man, sacrificed honor and consistency to revenge, joined the Tories, and became their most formidable champion. He soon found, however, that his old friends were less to blame than he had supposed. The dislike with which the Queen and the heads of the Church regarded him was insurmountable; and it was with the greatest difficulty that he obtained an ecclesiastical dignity of no great value, on condition of fixing his residence in a country which he detested.

Difference of political opinion had produced, not, indeed, a quarrel, but a coolness, between Swift and Addison. They at length ceased altogether to see each other. Yet there was between them a tacit compact like that between the hereditary guests[3] in the "Iliad:" —

[1] At the latter date Swift had suffered impairment of his mental powers and had become more moody and misanthropical.

[2] A powerful satire by Swift, written in the High Church interest, but in such a way as to shock many readers.

[3] Glaucus and Diomed.

Ἔγχεα δ' ἀλλήλων ἀλεώμεθα καὶ δι' ὁμίλου·
Πολλοὶ μὲν γὰρ ἐμοὶ Τρῶες κλειτοί τ' ἐπίκουροι,
Κτείνειν, ὃν κε δεός γε πόρῃ καὶ ποσσὶ κιχείω,
Πολλοὶ δ' αὖ σοὶ Ἀχαιοὶ, ἐναιρέμεν, ὃν κε δύνηαι.[1]

Iliad, Lib. VI. 226–229.

It is not strange that Addison, who calumniated and insulted nobody, should not have calumniated or insulted Swift; but it is remarkable that Swift, to whom neither genius nor virtue was sacred, and who generally seemed to find, like most other renegades, a peculiar pleasure in attacking old friends, should have shown so much respect and tenderness to Addison.

Fortune had now changed. The accession of the house of Hanover had secured in England the liberties of the people, and in Ireland the dominion of the Protestant caste. To that caste Swift was more odious than any other man. He was hooted and even pelted in the streets of Dublin, and could not venture to ride along the strand for his health without the attendance of armed servants. Many whom he had formerly served now libeled and insulted him. At this time Addison arrived. He had been advised not to show the smallest civility to the Dean of St. Patrick's. He had answered, with admirable spirit, that it might be necessary for men whose fidelity to their party was suspected to hold no intercourse with political opponents, but that one who had been a steady Whig in the worst times might venture, when the good cause was triumphant, to shake hands with an

[1] "Enough of Trojans to this lance shall yield,
In the full harvest of yon ample field;
Enough of Greeks shall dye thy spear with gore;
But thou and Diomed be foes no more."

POPE.

old friend who was one of the vanquished Tories. His kindness was soothing to the proud and cruelly wounded spirit of Swift, and the two great satirists resumed their habits of friendly intercourse.

Those associates of Addison whose political opinions agreed with his shared his good fortune. He took Tickell[1] with him to Ireland. He procured for Budgell a lucrative place in the same kingdom. Ambrose Philips was provided for in England.[2] Steele had injured himself so much by his eccentricity and perverseness that he obtained but a very small part of what he thought his due. He was, however, knighted; he had a place in the household;[3] and he subsequently received other marks of favor from the court.

Addison did not remain long in Ireland. In 1715 he quitted his secretaryship for a seat at the Board of Trade. In the same year his comedy of "The Drummer" was brought on the stage. The name of the author was not announced. The piece was coldly received, and some critics have expressed a doubt whether it were really Addison's. To us the evidence, both external and internal, seems decisive. It is not in Addison's best manner, but it contains numerous passages which no other writer known to us could have produced. It was again performed after Addison's death, and, being known to be his, was loudly applauded.

[1] As private secretary.

[2] Budgell was clerk and under-secretary to Addison and afterwards comptroller of the Irish revenue; Johnson says Philips was made only a lottery commissioner and justice of the peace.

[3] Surveyor of the royal stables, but he got several other favors. See Aitkin's *Life*.

Towards the close of the year 1715, while the Rebellion was still raging in Scotland,[1] Addison published the first number of a paper called "The Freeholder."[2] Among his political works "The Freeholder" is entitled to the first place. Even in "The Spectator" there are few serious papers nobler than the character of his friend Lord Somers, and certainly no satirical papers superior to those in which the Tory fox-hunter is introduced. This character is the original of Squire Western,[3] and is drawn with all Fielding's force, and with a delicacy of which Fielding was altogether destitute. As none of Addison's works exhibit stronger marks of his genius than "The Freeholder," so none does more honor to his moral character. It is difficult to extol too highly the candor and humanity of a political writer whom even the excitement of civil war cannot hurry into unseemly violence. Oxford, it is well known, was then the stronghold of Toryism. The High Street had been repeatedly lined with bayonets in order to keep down the disaffected gownsmen; and traitors pursued by the messengers of the government had been concealed in the garrets of several colleges. Yet the admonition which, even under such circumstances, Addison addressed to the university, is singularly gentle, respectful, and even affectionate; indeed, he could not find it in his heart to deal harshly even with imaginary persons. His fox-hunter, though ignorant, stupid, and violent, is at heart a good fellow, and is at last reclaimed by the clemency of the King. Steele was dissatisfied with his friend's moderation,

[1] Instigated by the Old Pretender and his followers.

[2] See page 126, note 6.

and, though he acknowledged that "The Freeholder" was excellently written, complained that the ministry played on a lute when it was necessary to blow the trumpet. He accordingly determined to execute a flourish after his own fashion, and tried to rouse the public spirit of the nation by means of a paper called the "Town Talk," which is now as utterly forgotten as his "Englishman," as his "Crisis," as his "Letter to the Bailiff of Stockbridge," as his "Reader;" in short, as everything that he wrote without the help of Addison.[1]

In the same year in which "The Drummer" was acted, and in which the first numbers of "The Freeholder" appeared, the estrangement of Pope and Addison became complete. Addison had from the first seen that Pope was false and malevolent. Pope had discovered that Addison was jealous. The discovery was made in a strange manner. Pope had written "The Rape of the Lock," in two cantos, without supernatural machinery. These two cantos had been loudly applauded, and by none more loudly than by Addison. Then Pope thought of the sylphs and gnomes, Ariel, Momentilla, Crispissa, and Umbriel, and resolved to interweave the Rosicrucian[2] mythol-

[1] A thoroughly exaggerated statement which will be objected to even by persons who are not particularly attracted to Steele. *Town Talk* ran from December 17, 1714, to February 13, 1715–16. *The Reader* appeared in 1714 and reached only nine numbers. *The Crisis* appeared in 1714; the *Letter to the Bailiff* in 1713. Professor Morley has reprinted *The Crisis* in his *Famous Pamphlets* ("Universal Library").

[2] In 1614 there was an anonymous work published in Germany with the avowed object of testing the pretensions of a certain order known as Rosicrucians, which was said to have been founded by Christian Rosenkreutz, in the fifteenth century.

ogy with the original fabric. He asked Addison's advice. Addison said that the poem as it stood was a delicious little thing, and entreated Pope not to run the risk of marring what was so excellent in trying to mend it. Pope afterwards declared that this insidious counsel first opened his eyes to the baseness of him who gave it.[1]

Now there can be no doubt that Pope's plan was most ingenious, and that he afterwards executed it with great skill and success; but does it necessarily follow that Addison's advice was bad? And, if Addison's advice was bad, does it necessarily follow that it was given from bad motives? If a friend were to ask us whether we would advise him to risk his all in a lottery of which the chances were ten to one against him, we should do our best to dissuade him from running such a risk. Even if he were so lucky as to get the thirty thousand pound prize, we should not admit that we had counseled him ill, and we should certainly think it the height of injustice in him to accuse us of having been actuated by malice. We think Addison's advice good advice. It rested on a sound principle, the result of long and wide experience. The general rule undoubtedly is, that, when a successful work of imagination has been produced, it should not be recast. We cannot at this moment call to mind a single instance in which this rule has been transgressed with happy effect, except

Their founder was supposed to have got various wonderful secrets (such as the art of making gold, etc.) from the East, and these mysteries his disciples practiced. The whole thing seems to have been a joke, but it was taken seriously and quite a literature *pro* and *con* sprang up about it.

[1] Greene, who included Macaulay's essay in his edition of Addison, says that this statement comes from Warburton.

the instance of "The Rape of the Lock." Tasso recast his "Jerusalem." Akenside[1] recast his "Pleasures of the Imagination" and his "Epistle to Curio." Pope himself, emboldened no doubt by the success with which he had expanded and remodeled "The Rape of the Lock," made the same experiment on "The Dunciad." All these attempts failed. Who was to foresee that Pope would, once in his life, be able to do what he could not himself do twice, and what nobody else has ever done?

Addison's advice was good; but, had it been bad, why should we pronounce it dishonest? Scott tells us that one of his best friends predicted the failure of "Waverley." Herder[2] adjured Goethe not to take so unpromising a subject as Faust. Hume tried to dissuade Robertson from writing "The History of Charles the Fifth." Nay, Pope himself was one of those who prophesied that "Cato" would never succeed on the stage, and advised Addison to print it without risking a representation. But Scott, Goethe, Robertson, Addison, had the good sense and generosity to give their advisers credit for the best intentions. Pope's heart was not of the same kind with theirs.

In 1715, while he was engaged in translating the "Iliad," he met Addison at a coffee-house. Philips and Budgell were there; but their sovereign got rid of them, and asked Pope to dine with him alone. After dinner, Addison said that he lay under a dif-

[1] Dr. Mark Akenside (1721–1770), poet and physician, was once much more famous than he is to-day. Smollett satirized him in *Peregrine Pickle.*

[2] Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744–1803), a celebrated philosopher, critic, and poet.

he wished to explain. "Tickell," he d some time ago the first book of the promised to look it over and correct efore ask to see yours, for that ling." Pope made a civil reply, nis second book might have the Addison's revision. Addison readily agreed, looked over the second book, and sent it back with warm commendations.

Tickell's version of the first book appeared soon after this conversation. In the preface, all rivalry was earnestly disclaimed. Tickell declared that he should not go on with the "Iliad." That enterprise he should leave to powers which he admitted to be superior to his own. His only view, he said, in publishing this specimen, was to bespeak the favor of the public to a translation of the "Odyssey" in which he had made some progress.

Addison, and Addison's devoted followers, pronounced both the versions good, but maintained that Tickell's had more of the original. The town gave a decided preference to Pope's. We do not think it worth while to settle such a question of precedence. Neither of the rivals can be said to have translated the "Iliad," unless, indeed, the word "translation" be used in the sense which it bears in the "Midsummer Night's Dream."[1] When Bottom makes his appearance with an ass's head instead of his own, Peter Quince exclaims, "Bless thee, Bottom! bless thee! thou art translated." In this sense, undoubtedly, the readers of either Pope or Tickell may very properly exclaim, "Bless thee, Homer! thou art translated indeed."[2]

[1] Act iv. Scene i. line 121.

[2] The spirit of humorous criticism should not blind the

Our readers will, we hope, agree with us in thinking that no man in Addison's situation could have acted more fairly and kindly, both towards Pope and towards Tickell, than he appears to have done. But an odious suspicion had sprung up in the mind of Pope. He fancied, and he soon firmly believed, that there was a deep conspiracy against his fame and his fortunes. The work on which he had staked his reputation was to be depreciated. The subscription, on which rested his hopes of a competence, was to be defeated. With this view, Addison had made a rival translation; Tickell had consented to father it; and the wits of Button's had united to puff it.

Is there any external evidence to support this grave accusation? The answer is short. There is absolutely none.

Was there any internal evidence which proved Addison to be the author of this version? Was it a work which Tickell was incapable of producing? Surely not. Tickell was a fellow of a college at Oxford,[1] and must be supposed to have been able to construe the "Iliad;" and he was a better versifier than his friend. We are not aware that Pope pretended to have discovered any turns of expression peculiar to Addison. Had such turns of expression been discovered, they would be sufficiently accounted for by supposing Addison to have corrected his friend's lines, as he owned that he had done.

Is there anything in the character of the accused persons which makes the accusation probable? We answer confidently, Nothing. Tickell was long after

student to the real merits of Pope's *Homer* viewed as a poem *per se*, not as a translation.

[1] Queen's College.

this time described by Pope himself as a very [illegible] and worthy man. Addison had been, during many years, before the public. Literary rivals, political opponents, had kept their eyes on him. But neither envy nor faction, in their utmost rage, had ever imputed to him a single deviation from the laws of honor and of social morality. Had he been, indeed, a man meanly jealous of fame, and capable of stooping to base and wicked arts for the purpose of injuring his competitors, would his vices have remained latent so long? He was a writer of tragedy: had he ever injured Rowe? He was a writer of comedy: had he not done ample justice to Congreve, and given valuable help to Steele? He was a pamphleteer: have not his good nature and generosity been acknowledged by Swift, his rival in fame and his adversary in politics?

That Tickell should have been guilty of a villany seems to us highly improbable. That Addison should have been guilty of a villany seems to us highly improbable. But that these two men should have conspired together to commit a villany seems to us improbable in a tenfold degree. All that is known to us of their intercourse tends to prove that it was not the intercourse of two accomplices in crime. These are some of the lines in which Tickell poured forth his sorrow over the coffin of Addison: —

> "Or dost thou warn poor mortals left behind,
> A task well suited to thy gentle mind?
> Oh, if, sometimes thy spotless form descend,
> To me thine aid, thou guardian genius, lend.
> When rage misguides me, or when fear alarms,
> When pain distresses, or when pleasure charms,
> In silent whisperings purer thoughts impart,
> And turn from ill a frail and feeble heart;

> Lead through the paths thy virtue trod before,
> Till bliss shall join, nor death can part us more." [1]

In what words, we should like to know, did this guardian genius invite his pupil to join in a plan such as the editor of "The Satirist" would hardly dare to propose to the editor of "The Age"?[2]

We do not accuse Pope of bringing an accusation which he knew to be false. We have not the smallest doubt that he believed it to be true, and the evidence on which he believed it he found in his own bad heart. His own life was one long series of tricks as mean and as malicious as that of which he suspected Addison and Tickell. He was all stiletto and mask. To injure, to insult, and to save himself from the consequences of injury and insult by lying and equivocating, was the habit of his life. He published a lampoon on the Duke of Chandos;[3] he was taxed with it, and he lied and equivocated. He published a lampoon on Aaron Hill;[4] he was taxed with it, and he lied and equivocated. He published a still fouler lampoon on Lady Mary Wortley Montagu;[5] he was

[1] See page 217, text and note 1.

[2] Low London papers of Macaulay's day.

[3] See *Moral Essays*, iv. 99. Pope, in a note to *Moral Essays*, iii., denied that he meant to ridicule "a worthy nobleman merely for his bad taste." James Bridges, first Duke of Chandos, (1673–1744).

[4] Aaron Hill (1685–1750) was a dramatist and small poet and manager of the opera house. Pope is supposed to have referred to him in *The Dunciad*, ii. 295–298. Pope denied the reference, though on the whole his remarks were complimentary, which makes one question Macaulay's use of "lampoon" unless he had another passage in mind.

[5] This probably refers to *Moral Essays*, ii., where Lady Mary is said to figure as Sappho; or to the imitation of the Second Satire of Horace's Second Book, lines 49–60. Lady Mary replied

taxed with it, and he lied with more than usual effrontery and vehemence. He puffed himself and abused his enemies under feigned names. He robbed himself of his own letters, and then raised the hue and cry after them. Besides his frauds of malignity, of fear, of interest, and of vanity, there were frauds which he seems to have committed from love of fraud alone. He had a habit of stratagem, a pleasure in outwitting all who came near him. Whatever his object might be, the indirect road to it was that which he preferred. For Bolingbroke, Pope undoubtedly felt as much love and veneration as it was in his nature to feel for any human being; yet Pope was scarcely dead when it was discovered that, from no motive except the mere love of artifice, he had been guilty of an act of gross perfidy to Bolingbroke.[1]

Nothing was more natural than that such a man as this should attribute to others that which he felt within himself. A plain, probable, coherent explanation is frankly given to him: he is certain that it is all a romance. A line of conduct scrupulously fair, and even friendly, is pursued towards him: he is convinced that it is merely a cover for a vile intrigue by which he is to be disgraced and ruined. It is vain to ask him for proofs. He has none, and wants none, except those which he carries in his own bosom.

Whether Pope's malignity at length provoked Addison to retaliate for the first and last time, cannot

in kind, and so deserves very little sympathy. Pope has ever since been known as "the wicked wasp of Twickenham."

[1] The printing without permission and with alterations certain letters of Bolingbroke's. For all these points about Pope see Life by Courthope in the Elwin-Courthope edition.

now be known with certainty. We have only Pope's story, which runs thus: a pamphlet appeared containing some reflections which stung Pope to the quick. What those reflections were, and whether they were reflections of which he had a right to complain, we have now no means of deciding. The Earl of Warwick,[1] a foolish and vicious lad, who regarded Addison with the feelings with which such lads generally regard their best friends, told Pope, truly or falsely, that this pamphlet had been written by Addison's direction. When we consider what a tendency stories have to grow in passing even from one honest man to another honest man, and when we consider that to the name of honest man neither Pope nor the Earl of Warwick had a claim, we are not disposed to attach much importance to this anecdote.

It is certain, however, that Pope was furious. He had already sketched the character of Atticus in prose. In his anger he turned this prose into the brilliant and energetic lines which everybody knows by heart, or ought to know by heart, and sent them to Addison.[2] One charge which Pope has enforced

[1] Afterwards Addison's step-son.

[2] The lines, first printed in connection with other verses in 1723, are 193–214 of the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* (1735):—

"Peace to all such! but were there one whose fires
True genius kindles, and fair fame inspires;
Blest with each talent and each art to please,
And born to write, converse and live with ease:
Should such a man, too fond to rule alone,
Bear, like the Turk, no brother near the throne,
View him with scornful, yet with jealous eyes,
And hate for arts that caused himself to rise;
Damn with faint praise, assent with civil leer,
And, without sneering, teach the rest to sneer;
Willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike,
Just hint a fault, and hesitate dislike
Alike reserved to blame, or to commend,
A timorous foe and a suspicious friend;

with great skill is probably not without foundation. Addison was, we are inclined to believe, too fond of presiding over a circle of humble friends. Of the other imputations which these famous lines are intended to convey, scarcely one has ever been proved to be just, and some are certainly false. That Addison was not in the habit of "damning with faint praise" appears from innumerable passages in his writings, and from none more than from those in which he mentions Pope. And it is not merely unjust, but ridiculous, to describe a man who made the fortune of almost every one of his intimate friends as "so obliging that he ne'er obliged."

That Addison felt the sting of Pope's satire keenly, we cannot doubt; that he was conscious of one of the weaknesses with which he was reproached, is highly probable: but his heart, we firmly believe, acquitted him of the gravest part of the accusation. He acted like himself. As a satirist, he was at his own weapons more than Pope's match, and he would have been at no loss for topics. A distorted and diseased body, tenanted by a yet more distorted and diseased mind; spite and envy thinly disguised by sentiments as benevolent and noble as those which Sir Peter Teazle admired in Mr. Joseph Surface;[1] a feeble, sickly licentiousness; an odious love of filthy and noisome images, — these were things which a genius

> Dreading ev'n fools, by flatterers besieged,
> And so obliging that he ne'er obliged;
> Like Cato, give his little Senate laws,
> And sit attentive to his own applause,
> While wits and templars every sentence raise,
> And wonder with a foolish face of praise:
> Who but must laugh, if such a man there be?
> Who would not weep, if Atticus were he?"

[1] Characters in Sheridan's *School for Scandal.*

less powerful than that to which we owe "The Spectator" could easily have held up to the mirth and hatred of mankind. Addison had, moreover, at his command other means of vengeance, which a bad man would not have scrupled to use. He was powerful in the State. Pope was a Catholic, and in those times a minister would have found it easy to harass the most innocent Catholic by innumerable petty vexations. Pope, near twenty years later, said that "through the lenity of the government alone he could live with comfort." "Consider," he exclaimed, "the injury that a man of high rank and credit may do to a private person, under penal laws and many other disadvantages." It is pleasing to reflect that the only revenge which Addison took was to insert in "The Freeholder"[1] a warm encomium on the translation of the "Iliad," and to exhort all lovers of learning to put down their names as subscribers. There could be no doubt, he said, from the specimens already published, that the masterly hand of Pope would do as much for Homer as Dryden had done for Virgil. From that time to the end of his life, he always treated Pope, by Pope's own acknowledgment, with justice. Friendship was, of course, at an end.

One reason which induced the Earl of Warwick to play the ignominious part of tale-bearer on this occasion may have been his dislike of the marriage which was about to take place between his mother and Addison. The countess dowager,[2] a daughter of the

[1] No. 40.

[2] Charlotte, daughter of Sir Thomas Middleton, married Edward Rich, third Earl of Holland and sixth Earl of Warwick. She had by him a son, Edward Henry Rich (the Earl of Warwick of the text), who died unmarried in 1721. The countess died in 1731, leaving one daughter by Addison.

old and honorable family of the Middletons of Chirk, a family which in any country but ours would be called noble, resided at Holland House.[1] Addison had, during some years, occupied at Chelsea a small dwelling, once the abode of Nell Gwynn.[2] Chelsea is now a district of London, and Holland House may be called a town residence; but, in the days of Anne and George I., milkmaids and sportsmen wandered between green hedges, and over fields bright with daisies, from Kensington almost to the shore of the Thames. Addison and Lady Warwick were country neighbors, and became intimate friends. The great wit and scholar tried to allure the young lord from the fashionable amusements of beating watchmen, breaking windows, and rolling women in hogsheads down Holborn Hill, to the study of letters and the practice of virtue. These well-meant exertions did little good, however, either to the disciple or to the master. Lord Warwick grew up a rake, and Addison fell in love. The mature beauty of the countess has been celebrated by poets[3] in language which, after a very large allowance has been made for flattery, would lead us to believe that she was a fine woman; and her rank doubtless heightened her attractions. The courtship was long. The hopes of the lover appear to have risen and fallen with the fortunes of his party. His attachment was at length matter of such notoriety that, when he visited Ireland for the last time, Rowe addressed some

[1] See Hare's *Walks in London;* Macaulay's essay on Lord Holland; and passages in the *Life and Letters.*

[2] The famous mistress of Charles II., who died in 1691 at about fifty.

[3] See, for example, the lines by Leonard Welsted, prefixed to *Addison's Drummer.*

consolatory verses to the Chloe of Holland House. It strikes us as a little strange that in these verses Addison should be called Lycidas, a name of singularly evil omen for a swain just about to cross St. George's Channel.[1]

At length Chloe capitulated. Addison was, indeed, able to treat with her on equal terms. He had reason to expect preferment even higher than that which he had attained. He had inherited the fortune of a brother[2] who died governor of Madras. He had purchased an estate in Warwickshire, and had been welcomed to his domain in very tolerable verse by one of the neighboring squires, the poetical fox-hunter, William Somerville.[3] In August, 1716, the newspapers announced that Joseph Addison, Esq., famous for many excellent works both in verse and prose, had espoused the Countess Dowager of Warwick.

He now fixed his abode at Holland House, a house which can boast of a greater number of inmates distinguished in political and literary history than any other private dwelling in England. His portrait still hangs there. The features are pleasing; the complexion is remarkably fair; but in the expression we trace rather the gentleness of his disposition than the force and keenness of his intellect.

Not long after his marriage he reached the height of civil greatness. The Whig government had, during some time, been torn by internal dissensions.

[1] The reference is, of course, to Milton's *Lycidas*, which was written in memory of Edward King, who had been drowned in a voyage to Ireland.

[2] Gulstone Addison.

[3] 1667–1742. He is chiefly remembered for his blank-verse poem *The Chase*, in which he described his favorite pursuit.

Lord Townshend[1] led one section of the cabinet, Lord Sunderland the other. At length, in the spring of 1717, Sunderland triumphed. Townshend retired from office, and was accompanied by Walpole and Cowper. Sunderland proceeded to reconstruct the ministry, and Addison was appointed secretary of state. It is certain that the seals were pressed upon him, and were at first declined by him. Men equally versed in official business might easily have been found; and his colleagues knew that they could not expect assistance from him in debate. He owed his elevation to his popularity, to his stainless probity, and to his literary fame.

But scarcely had Addison entered the cabinet when his health began to fail. From one serious attack he recovered in the autumn; and his recovery was celebrated in Latin verses, worthy of his own pen, by Vincent Bourne, who was then at Trinity College, Cambridge. A relapse soon took place, and in the following spring Addison was prevented by a severe asthma from discharging the duties of his post. He resigned it, and was succeeded by his friend Craggs,[2] a young man whose natural parts, though little improved by cultivation, were quick and showy, whose graceful person and winning manners had made him generally acceptable in society, and who, if he had lived, would probably have been the most formidable of all the rivals of Walpole.

As yet there was no Joseph Hume.[3] The minis-

[1] Charles, Viscount Townshend (1676–1738), Secretary of State at the accession of George I. He was Walpole's brother-in-law, and had a breach with him later in his career.

[2] James Craggs (died in 1720, aged thirty-five). See his Epitaph by Pope.

[3] a member of Parliament indefatigable in at-

ters, therefore, were able to bestow on Addison a retiring pension of fifteen hundred pounds a year. In what form this pension was given, we are not told by the biographers, and have not time to inquire; but it is certain that Addison did not vacate his seat in the House of Commons.

Rest of mind and body seemed to have reëstablished his health, and he thanked God, with cheerful piety, for having set him free both from his office and from his asthma. Many years seemed to be before him; and he meditated many works, — a tragedy on the death of Socrates, a translation of the Psalms, a treatise on the evidences of Christianity. Of this last performance, a part, which we could well spare, has come down to us.

But the fatal complaint soon returned, and gradually prevailed against all the resources of medicine. It is melancholy to think that the last months of such a life should have been overclouded both by domestic and by political vexations. A tradition which began early, which has been generally received, and to which we have nothing to oppose, has represented his wife as an arrogant and imperious woman. It is said that, till his health failed him, he was glad to escape from the countess dowager and her magnificent dining-room, blazing with the gilded devices of the house of Rich,[1] to some tavern where he could enjoy a laugh, a talk about Virgil and Boileau, and a bottle of claret, with the friends of his happier days. All those friends, however, were not left to him. Sir Richard

tacking financial abuses and in pushing on reforms of every sort.

[1] That is, Holland House, so called because the Earl of Holland, who gave it its name, was Henry Rich.

Steele had been gradually estranged by various causes. He considered himself as one who, in evil times, had braved martyrdom for his political principles, and demanded, when the Whig party was triumphant, a large compensation for what he had suffered when it was militant. The Whig leaders took a very different view of his claims. They thought that he had, by his own petulance and folly, brought them as well as himself into trouble, and, though they did not absolutely neglect him, doled out favors to him with a sparing hand. It was natural that he should be angry with them, and especially angry with Addison. But what, above all, seems to have disturbed Sir Richard was the elevation of Tickell, who at thirty was made by Addison undersecretary of state; while the editor of the "Tatler" and "Spectator," the author of "The Crisis," the member for Stockbridge, who had been persecuted for firm adherence to the house of Hanover, was, at near fifty, forced, after many solicitations and complaints, to content himself with a share in the patent of Drury Lane Theatre. Steele himself says, in his celebrated letter to Congreve,[1] that Addison, by his preference of Tickell, "incurred the warmest resentment of other gentlemen;" and everything seems to indicate that, of those resentful gentlemen, Steele was himself one.

While poor Sir Richard was brooding over what he considered as Addison's unkindness, a new cause of quarrel arose. The Whig party, already divided against itself, was rent by a new schism. The celebrated bill for limiting the number of peers had been brought in. The proud Duke of Somerset, first in

[1] publication of Tickell's edition of Addi-

rank of all the nobles whose religion permitted them to sit in Parliament, was the ostensible author of the measure; but it was supported, and in truth devised, by the prime minister.[1]

We are satisfied that the bill was most pernicious, and we fear that the motives which induced Sunderland to frame it were not honorable to him; but we cannot deny that it was supported by many of the best and wisest men of that age. Nor was this strange. The royal prerogative had, within the memory of the generation then in the vigor of life, been so grossly abused that it was still regarded with a jealousy which, when the peculiar situation of the house of Brunswick[2] is considered, may perhaps be called immoderate. The particular prerogative of creating peers had, in the opinion of the Whigs, been grossly abused by Queen Anne's last ministry;[3] and even the Tories admitted that her Majesty, in swamping, as it has since been called, the Upper House, had done what only an extreme case could justify. The theory of the English Constitution, according to many high authorities, was, that three independent powers — the sovereign, the nobility, and the commons — ought constantly to act as checks on each other. If this theory were sound, it seemed to follow that to put one of these powers under the absolute control of the other two was absurd. But, if the number of peers were unlimited, it could not well be denied that the Upper House was under the absolute control of

[1] Macaulay refers to Lord Sunderland, who was in power with Lord Stanhope (1719).

[2] That is, of Hanover. George I. was Elector of Brunswick-Lüneburg.

[3] Twelve Tory peers had been created in December, 1711, to counterbalance the Whig majority in the House of Lords.

the Crown and the Commons, and was indebted only to their moderation for any power which it might be suffered to retain.

Steele took part with the Opposition, Addison with the Ministers. Steele, in a paper called "The Plebeian,"[1] vehemently attacked the bill. Sunderland called for help on Addison, and Addison obeyed the call. In a paper called "The Old Whig,"[2] he answered, and indeed refuted, Steele's arguments. It seems to us that the premises of both the controversialists were unsound; that on those premises Addison reasoned well and Steele ill; and that consequently Addison brought out a false conclusion, while Steele blundered upon the truth. In style, in wit, and in politeness Addison maintained his superiority, though "The Old Whig" is by no means one of his happiest performances.

At first, both the anonymous opponents observed the laws of propriety. But at length Steele so far forgot himself as to throw an odious imputation on the morals of the chiefs of the administration. Addison replied with severity, but, in our opinion, with less severity than was due to so grave an offense against morality and decorum; nor did he, in his just anger, forget for a moment the laws of good taste and good breeding. One calumny which has been often repeated, and never yet contradicted, it is our duty to expose. It is asserted in the "Biographia Britannica" that Addison designated Steele as "little Dicky." This assertion was repeated by Johnson, who had never seen "The Old Whig" and was there-

[1] Begun March 14, 1718–19, four numbers published.

[2] Begun Thursday, March 19, 1718–19, only two numbers published.

fore excusable. It has also been repeated by Miss Aikin, who has seen "The Old Whig," and for whom, therefore, there is less excuse. Now, it is true that the words "little Dicky" occur in "The Old Whig," and that Steele's name was Richard. It is equally true that the words "little Isaac" occur in "The Duenna,"[1] and that Newton's name was Isaac. But we confidently affirm that Addison's little Dicky had no more to do with Steele than Sheridan's little Isaac with Newton. If we apply the words "little Dicky" to Steele, we deprive a very lively and ingenious passage, not only of all its wit, but of all its meaning. Little Dicky was the nickname of Henry Norris,[2] an actor of remarkably small stature but of great humor, who played the usurer Gomez, then a most popular part, in Dryden's "Spanish Friar."

The merited reproof which Steele had received, though softened by some kind and courteous expressions, galled him bitterly. He replied with little force and great acrimony, but no rejoinder appeared. Addison was fast hastening to his grave, and had, we may well suppose, little disposition to prosecute a quarrel with an old friend. His complaint had terminated in dropsy. He bore up long and manfully; but at length he abandoned all hope, dismissed his physicians, and calmly prepared himself to die.

His works he intrusted to the care of Tickell,[3] and dedicated them, a very few days before his death, to Craggs, in a letter written with the sweet and grace-

[1] A comic opera (1775) by Sheridan.

[2] Died 1733. He was a good comedian, and was known as "Jubilee Dicky," from his impersonation of a character in Farquhar's *Constant Couple*.

[3] Who edited them in 1721. The letter to Craggs was prefixed to this edition.

ful eloquence of a Saturday's "Spectator." In this his last composition he alluded to his approaching end in words so manly, so cheerful, and so tender that it is difficult to read them without tears. At the same time, he earnestly recommended the interests of Tickell to the care of Craggs.

Within a few hours of the time at which this dedication was written, Addison sent to beg Gay,[1] who was then living by his wits about town, to come to Holland House. Gay went, and was received with great kindness. To his amazement, his forgiveness was implored by the dying man. Poor Gay, the most good-natured and simple of mankind, could not imagine what he had to forgive. There was, however, some wrong, the remembrance of which weighed on Addison's mind, and which he declared himself anxious to repair. He was in a state of extreme exhaustion, and the parting was doubtless a friendly one on both sides. Gay supposed that some plan to serve him had been in agitation at court, and had been frustrated by Addison's influence. Nor is this improbable. Gay had paid assiduous court to the royal family. But in the Queen's days he had been the eulogist of Bolingbroke, and was still connected with many Tories. It is not strange that Addison, while heated by conflict, should have thought himself justified in obstructing the preferment of one whom he might regard as a political enemy. Neither is it strange that, when reviewing his whole life and earnestly scrutinizing all his motives, he should think that he had acted an unkind and ungenerous part in using his power against a distressed man of letters who was as harmless and as helpless as a child.

[1] See the essay on Johnson, page 13, note 1.

One inference may be drawn from this anecdote. It appears that Addison, on his death-bed, called himself to a strict account, and was not at ease till he had asked pardon for an injury which it was not even suspected that he had committed, — for an injury which would have caused disquiet only to a very tender conscience. Is it not, then, reasonable to infer that, if he had really been guilty of forming a base conspiracy against the fame and fortunes of a rival, he would have expressed some remorse for so serious a crime? But it is unnecessary to multiply arguments and evidence for the defense when there is neither argument nor evidence for the accusation.

The last moments of Addison were perfectly serene. His interview with his son-in-law is universally known. "See," he said, "how a Christian can die." The piety of Addison was, in truth, of a singularly cheerful character. The feeling which predominates in all his devotional writings is gratitude. God was to him the all-wise and all-powerful Friend who had watched over his cradle with more than maternal tenderness; who had listened to his cries before they could form themselves in prayer; who had preserved his youth from the snares of vice; who had made his cup run over with worldly blessings; who had doubled the value of those blessings by bestowing a thankful heart to enjoy them, and dear friends to partake them; who had rebuked the waves of the Ligurian gulf, had purified the autumnal air of the Campagna, and had restrained the avalanches of Mont Cenis. Of the Psalms, his favorite was that which represents the Ruler of all things under the endearing image of a shepherd whose crook guides the flock safe through gloomy and desolate glens to meadows well watered

and rich with herbage.[1] On that goodness to which he ascribed all the happiness of his life he relied in the hour of death with the love which casteth out fear. He died on the 17th of June, 1719. He had just entered on his forty-eighth year.

His body lay in state in the Jerusalem Chamber,[2] and was borne thence to the Abbey at dead of night. The choir sang a funeral hymn. Bishop Atterbury,[3] one of those Tories who had loved and honored the most accomplished of the Whigs, met the corpse, and led the procession by torchlight round the shrine of St. Edward[4] and the graves of the Plantagenets to the chapel of Henry VII. On the north side of that chapel, in the vault of the house of Albemarle,[5] the coffin of Addison lies next to the coffin of Montague. Yet a few months, and the same mourners passed again along the same aisle. The same sad anthem was again chanted. The same vault was again opened, and the coffin of Craggs was placed close to the coffin of Addison.

Many tributes were paid to the memory of Addison, but one alone is now remembered. Tickell bewailed his friend in an elegy which would do honor

[1] Psalm twenty-third, which Addison versified in *The Spectator*, No. 441.

[2] See Hare's *Walks in London* for this noted chamber in Westminster Abbey, which perhaps gets its name from its tapestry, which described the history of Jerusalem.

[3] Francis Atterbury (1662–1732), Bishop of Rochester, noted for his wit and learning and for his zeal for the Jacobite cause, which led to his being exiled to France. See Macaulay's essay on him.

[4] The Confessor (1004–1066).

[5] George Monk (1608–1670), first Duke of Albemarle, prominent at the Restoration, was buried here.

to the greatest name in our literature, and which unites the energy and magnificence of Dryden to the tenderness and purity of Cowper.[1] This fine poem was prefixed to a superb edition of Addison's works which was published in 1721 by subscription. The names of the subscribers proved how widely his fame had been spread. That his countrymen should be eager to possess his writings, even in a costly form, is not wonderful; but it is wonderful that, though English literature was then little studied on the Continent, Spanish grandees, Italian prelates, marshals of France should be found in the list. Among the most remarkable names are those of the Queen of Sweden, of Prince Eugene, of the Grand Duke of Tuscany, of the Dukes of Parma, Modena, and Guastalla,[2] of the Doge of Genoa, of the Regent Orleans,[3] and of Cardinal Dubois. We ought to add that this edition, though eminently beautiful, is in some important points defective; nor, indeed, do we yet possess a complete collection of Addison's writings.

It is strange that neither his opulent and noble widow, nor any of his powerful and attached friends, should have thought of placing even a simple tablet,

[1] William Cowper (1731–1800), the author of *The Task*, whose lines to the memory of his mother on the receipt of her picture were in Macaulay's mind when he wrote his rather extravagant praise of Tickell's elegy. Dryden's magnificence may be seen in certain stanzas of his *Ode* in memory of Mistress Anne Killigrew, but will be looked for in vain in Tickell's lines, excellent though they be.

[2] All in northern Italy.

[3] Philippe, Duke of Orleans (1674–1723), Regent of France during the minority of Louis XV. His court was noted for its debaucheries. Cardinal Guillaume Dubois (1656–1723) was a famous minister of the same period. See Perkins's *France under the Regency*.

inscribed with his name, on the walls of the Abbey. It was not till three generations had laughed and wept over his pages that the omission was supplied by the public veneration. At length, in our own time, his image, skillfully graven, appeared in Poets' Corner. It represents him, as we can conceive him, — clad in his dressing-gown and freed from his wig, — stepping from his parlor at Chelsea into his trim little garden, with the account of "The Everlasting Club," or "The Loves of Hilpa and Shalum," just finished for the next day's "Spectator," in his hand. Such a mark of national respect was due to the unsullied statesman, to the accomplished scholar, to the master of pure English eloquence, to the consummate painter of life and manners. It was due, above all, to the great satirist who alone knew how to use ridicule without abusing it, who, without inflicting a wound, effected a great social reform, and who reconciled wit and virtue, after a long and disastrous separation, during which wit had been led astray by profligacy, and virtue by fanaticism.

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